

PLANNING COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY, 28 MAY 2025 - 1.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor R Gerstner and Councillor E Sennitt Clough, Councillor M Purser (Substitute)

APOLOGIES: Councillor D Connor (Chairman) and Councillor N Meekins,

Officers in attendance: David Rowen (Development Manager), Alan Davies (Principal Planning Officer), Tom Donnelly (Senior Development Officer), Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer) and Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer)

P1/25 **APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Purser and resolved that Councillor Connor be elected as Chairman of the Planning Committee for the municipal year.

P2/25 **APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26**

It was proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and resolved that Councillor Marks be elected as Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee for the municipal year.

P3/25 **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the 30 April 2025 were signed and agreed as an accurate record.

P4/25 **F/YR20/0234/O**
LAND NORTH OF 3A-9 BRIDGE LANE, WIMBLINGTON
HYBRID APPLICATION: OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED
IN RESPECT OF ACCESS FOR THE ERECTION OF UP TO 16 X DWELLINGS.
FULL APPLICATION FOR THE FORMATION OF AN ACCESS, INTERNAL ROAD,
OPEN SPACE AND DRAINAGE INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING
DWELLING AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND PROVISION OF PASSING
BAYS AND A FOOTWAY LINK TO MARCH ROAD.

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French asked why this application has taken 5 years to come before committee? David Rowen responded that it is an application that has quite a lot of different elements within it in terms of the viability side and also the highway works. He continued that whilst officers aim to determine applications quicker than this there have been a number of delays, several of which do rest with the applicant in terms of providing the necessary information.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she does not see any recommendations or any discussions with any of the drainage boards and there are drains in this vicinity. She asked if it known if the applicant has been in discussion with the drainage boards? David Rowen

responded that Middle Level were consulted but as members are aware it can be selective in the applications that it comments upon and it is not a statutory consultee and as a consequence no representation has been received. Councillor Mrs French stated that she does have a drainage board meeting tomorrow and she will raise this with them. She added that at a meeting last week they are working on a new policy and hopefully working with Fenland's Planning Team to see if some of the issues can be resolved.

- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked about mitigation in terms of the sewage pumping station and the odour coming from this as it is 15 metres away and also an explanation on the covenant that restricts development to 10 dwellings? David Rowen responded that, in terms of the impact of the sewage pumping station, Environmental Health have been consulted and have raised no concerns on any environmental effects, which is set out at 5.5 of the officer's report. He continued that covenants are not a material planning consideration and is a separate legal issue for whoever imposed that covenant to deal with.
- Councillor Gerstner asked for an explanation on how the viability study was carried out and that there is no affordable housing and how the Section 106 money came to that figure? David Rowen responded that the requirements of the legal agreement is set out at 10.37 of the officer's report which is basically to secure a contribution of £300,000 to be split between the NHS receiving £13,755 and towards off-site affordable housing of £186,244. He continued that the application has undertaken a viability assessment and as intimated earlier in the response to Councillor Mrs French's question this is one of the reasons why it has taken so long to get to the determination stage, with the background to this all within the report.
- Councillor Gerstner asked who does the affordable housing money go to? David Rowen responded that this will be put in the 'pot' that the Council has to deliver affordable housing around the District. Councillor Gerstner asked at what stages will that money be paid? David Rowen responded that this will still need to be decided as part of the Section 106 Agreement but the housing units themselves are, at this stage, in outline so a reserved matters detailed scheme would need to be submitted. He continued that he would guess that the triggers would need to be a certain number of units provided on site to deliver the contribution but it will be delivered before the completion of all 16 units.
- Councillor Mrs French asked why it is taking months and months to get Section 106 Agreements signed? David Rowen responded that he did not think that this was a matter relevant to this application and should be a separate enquiry to either himself or the Head of Planning outside of the meeting.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that due to the length of time this application has taken to come to a determination, being sure all the details have been worked out, she does not think there is much need for deliberation.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that this is a brownfield site and thinks it is an ideal opportunity to build on it.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Gerstner and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.

P5/25

F/YR24/1000/F

**LAND WEST OF 27 NORFOLK STREET ACCESSED FROM MORLEY WAY,
WIMBLINGTON**

**ERECT 5 DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED GARAGES AND THE FORMATION
OF AN ATTENUATION POND**

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Steve Dubois, an objector. Mr Dubois stated that he lives at 31 Norfolk Street, the Listed Building

that borders the proposed development and he opposes the proposal and welcomes the officer's recommendation to refuse. He stated that whether or not committee agree with the heritage assessment, when it comes to evaluating the recommendation, everyone is bound by the same guiding principles in that great weight should be given to the assets conservation, that the Local Planning Authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and its settings, and whilst these are a matter for the committee, the NPPF also states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as is the case with 31 Norfolk Street, this harm should be weighted against the public benefit of the proposal.

Mr Dubois questioned what the benefits of the proposal are, increased housing stock, opportunity to monetize an underdeveloped parcel of land and consideration of the key themes from the 23 letters of support, which need to be weighed against the harm to the Listed Building and the loss of green space. He expressed the opinion that there would be an increased fire risk, it is a thatched property, and there would be a loss of privacy and there is a lack of community support as evidenced by the 78 letters of objection.

Mr Dubois stated that he appreciates that the Council is working on a new plan but as a designated growth village Wimblington has reached nearly three times its target set in 2014 and, in his view, there is no economic merit in building a further five homes and there is a significant development in Wimblington and the wider March area to keep much of the local construction industry busy for quite some time. He feels that building in what is an area favoured by older residents has no educational merit and the proposed development would do very little to address the undersubscription of the Thomas Eaton Primary School.

Mr Dubois expressed the view that the proposal also has no social merit, it has no affordable housing and potentially compounds already stretched medical services. He stated that he has lived in the village for 25 years and when he moved this house it could be seen from March Road, hedges were much lower and looking west he could see the big skies and Fen sunsets from his patio and that is the traditional context in which 31 Norfolk Street should be appreciated.

Mr Dubois referred to the presentation screen which shows the growth of housing and the erosion of green spaces within the heart of the village and he showed an aerial view of the proposed site as it stands today, the modern Morley Way development to the west, the green amenity to the north acting as buffer between the old and the new in line with Wimblington and Stonea design guidance and codes which stipulates "new developments in proximity to designated and non-designated heritage assets must propose green screenings to mitigate any unpleasant visual impact whilst also preserving key views". He expressed the opinion that in light of this statement the impact of the proposal need to be considered on 31 Norfolk Street, many letters of support reference the scheme being an extension of Morley Way and there is no disputing that access is from Morley Way but viewed from the air the photo clearly shows it to be a standalone development.

Mr Dubois stated that supporters also place significant weight on having the same developer as Morley Way and when a buffer between old and new is mentioned Construct Reason Ltd were the ones responsible for siting of the green amenity now an asset of community value between Morley Way and the heritage part of the village and that same developer is now proposing to develop a site that is closer to the Listed Building than the very buffer they created some 20 years earlier and, in his view, is incongruous and not a benefit. He continued that supporters of the scheme believe that there is a need for more bungalows in Wimblington, with the proposed development being for five three-bedroom bungalows, however, the Wimblington and Stonea Housing Needs Assessment of January 2023 stated that the village far exceeds the national average for built bungalows and suggests that the greater proportion of dwellings be delivered as two-bedroom dwellings with an emphasis on affordable housing so this is not a benefit.

Mr Dubois made the point that the Fenland Local Plan calls for a presumption in favour of sustainable development, it talks of growth that is not for its own sake and, in his view, the only true benefit of this proposal is the monetization of an undeveloped parcel of land and that is not a public benefit. He expressed the opinion, in line with NPPF guidelines, there is no clear and convincing justification or public benefit that outweighs the harm to the setting of the Listed Building and to draw any other conclusion would be irrational.

Members asked questions of Mr Dubois as follows:

- Councillor Sennitt Clough referred to the word 'harm' being used a lot and everybody has a different interpretation of what harm means and asked if Mr Dubois could state what this term means to him with regard to what he thinks it will mean with this development next to his property? Mr Dubois responded that he is not a planning expert and he would defer that question to the planning experts, the same people who have made a recommendation of refusal. He expressed the opinion that there is a heritage asset and a legacy in that this property has stood there for over 200 years in an open space and this proposal would enclose this space. Mr Dubois stated that there is a connection between his property and the other Listed Building at Addison Road and that is the field that separates them. Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that she appreciates that there is a technical aspect but was asking the question to obtain his own personal experience. Mr Dubois responded that his house has been in existence for 200 years, it is a Listed Building and it does not have the modern amenities in terms of things such as soundproofing, double glazing and it is a one and a half elevation building, with upstairs being plasterboard and thatch so you can hear everything outside. He expressed the view that it is dependent upon its isolation to modern living and it is not conducive to being in an environment with a housing density that you have as part of a modern development.
- Councillor Benney stated that he assumes that Mr Dubois bought this house many years ago and asked if the field was ever part of the land that was associated with that house? Mr Dubois responded that not in his lifetime, it was always part of the farm behind the house but does believe there was a relationship between the land and the house at Addison House. Councillor Benney reiterated was this house ever associated with this house, has somebody sold the land off separately? Mr Dubois responded that it was always a separate piece of land but whilst ownership was different the location has always been in the context of that land.
- Councillor Marks referred to the photo which shows the proposal imposed on the land and asked what distance from his property he believes the new development will be? Mr Dubois responded that the plan is marked up and from memory he believes it is 36 metres.
- Councillor Marks asked if the proximity to the other buildings surrounding his property were at the same distance? Mr Dubois responded that the road to the right is Norfolk Street, formerly the High Street, and the nearest building is about 25 metres away and that is the back of the garage and is probably around 30 metres to Norfolk Street.
- Councillor Marks asked for confirmation that the new proposed buildings would be 36 metres from the back as well? Mr Dubois responded that this is incorrect as 31 Norfolk Street is set back in its plot whereas every other house along Norfolk Street is running adjacent to the street. He stated that the one house that is most effected and nearest to the development is the Listed Building, the thatched property at 31 Norfolk Street. Councillor Marks requested clarification that the existing properties are 25 metres from his property and the new proposed rear of the properties would be 36 metres. Mr Dubois responded that his neighbours to the front of his property are roughly 25 metres in line with the road but this development is at the rear his house and that would be effectively 36 metres. He added that one of the things about having a thatched property is things like Guy Fawkes night are not the greatest time of year and in his insurance they are not allowed to have any incineration or burning within 100 metres and those back gardens will literally be the other side of the hedge and he cannot stop people from having barbecues, setting off fireworks or from incineration and potentially he has two if not three properties that would be incredibly close to his thatched property. Councillor Marks made the point that he also has existing

properties within 25 metres who could also have barbecues or fires so this problem already exists. Mr Dubois agreed and the owners of the land have had bonfires on the land but they have been set much further back than this proposed development and they did have to call the Fire Service on one occasion. He added that it would be incredibly concerning and this proposal is a lot closer than 50 metres away where the owners might have previously had bonfires.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Amy Richardson, on behalf of the agent. Ms Richardson stated that they have worked closely with the planning officer throughout the planning process and dealt with any issues proactively and as noted within his report the scheme complies with Policy LP3 of the Local Plan, provides a scheme that is in keeping with the surrounding pattern of development in Morley Way and Waggoners Way and does not give rise to any unacceptable amenity impacts in accordance with Policy LP16 and LP12. She made the point that the officer refers to the fact that the plot sizes are generous and avoid a cramped form of development while still making an efficient use of the land.

Ms Richardson expressed the opinion that the main issue is the impact on the Listed Building at 31 Norfolk Street and as members will be aware from the officer report the previous scheme for 8 bungalows was withdrawn to try and address the impact of development on the listed property, with the scheme being reduced to only 5 bungalows with frontage development onto a private road, which will remain private and not be offered for adoption. She expressed the view that all issues around drainage have been addressed and the LLFA have no objections

Ms Richardson expressed the opinion that the original listing of 31 Norfolk Street only referred to 3 windows which face east, the front elevation of the property towards Norfolk Street and part of the original rectangular shaped cottage, with more recent additions having been added to the western side of the property together with a detached garage. She stated that there are no first-floor windows in the Listed Building facing towards the application site and the nearest bungalows are over 36 metres away.

Ms Richardson stated that they have added photos of the Listed Building which confirm there are no windows facing the development, taken from estate agents particulars as the property is currently on the market. She stated that their heritage consultant has tried to address the concerns raised by the Conservation Officer, noting amongst things that the village of Wimblington has significantly changed over the last 100 years from a much smaller village to a growth village, noting there is nothing to suggest that 31 Norfolk Street has had a direct functional connection with the site, such as grazing or farmland, and the site is not known to have ever been grazing land and the asset is not located within the open countryside or on the edge of the village but is surrounded by residential development within the heart of the village.

Ms Richardson expressed the opinion that the grounds of the Listed Building primarily extend to the east towards Norfolk Street where the majority of the bedroom windows face suggesting that the property is clearly orientated towards the east and this has formed its primary amenity space. She feels that Conservation Officer has given undue weight to the contribution the site makes to the setting of the Listed Building and has failed to acknowledge the current setting asset as experienced is one of residential built form.

Ms Richardson stated that the proposed layout was amended to offer a single line of dwellings to the far west of the site and provide greater distances to the Listed Building within the spaces between each dwelling, helping to ensure that the dwellings do not appear as a solid wall of development and with a variety of roofscapes helping to break up the massing. She made the point that the District Council is looking to sell the open space in Morley Way that the applicants provided as part of the original Morley Way development and this will take away the nearby public open space and, in her view, will be subject to residential development removing current green space.

Ms Richardson asked members to look at the benefits of this scheme and what it can provide, with the largely supporting nature of the planning officer's comments and go against the Conservation Officer's recommendations.

Members asked questions of Ms Richardson as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French referred to Anglian Water having concerns and asked if these concerns have been addressed? Ms Richardson responded that they have been addressed and there are no drainage issues.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Gerstner expressed the view that this is a difficult decision in respect of the heritage site, with it being a greenfield site nearby and he has reservations about the impact on noise and amenity in the questions that Councillor Marks asked the objector. He feels it is a question of where does the committee value heritage as it looks to be a well thought out designed development.
- Councillor Benney acknowledged what the objector has said but if this was any other development the distance between houses is 21 metres and there is 36 metres here. He feels the developer has worked to try and mitigate the harm to the historic building and a historic building should not be a block to development, it is a piece of land and well within the built form of Wimblington. Councillor Benney made the point that it is land usage that committee is looking at and is this land suitable to build on and whilst he does take on board the fire risk comments with a thatched cottage that is a risk that is taken when a thatched cottage is brought. He stated that this piece of land, from what the objector was saying, has no connection to this house and, in his view, this has been well planned out and consideration has been given to keep the distance away from the heritage asset, with other applications having been previously passed which are a lot closer to a heritage asset. Councillor Benney expressed the opinion that there is sufficient green space left to safeguard the heritage asset and provide the homes that Fenland needs.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough agreed with the comments already raised by councillors and acknowledged that it is a difficult decision as she thinks that the bungalows look a very nice design, they are some distance away but questions whether there is a need for more properties to surround this historic building and she keeps coming back to LP18. She reiterated that it is difficult weighing up the value of this thatched building with the need for bungalows and as stated Wimblington is a growth village but its growth has been reached.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that there seems to be a good break between the development and the Listed Building, which, in his view, is acceptable, it does not appear to be overdeveloped and looks to be good planned desirable buildings, with a need for these types of buildings. He added that whether that field was part of the heritage of that building is not known but it does not make much difference.
- Councillor Purser stated that he has visited the site and feels there is a need for the development and a need for bungalows but a lot of the people that live there already are older, retired people and the heavy traffic going through there to access the site could have a detrimental effect to their properties. He added that he believes there is the possibility of a flooding issue in this area so is concerned for the people who already live here.
- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that what Councillor Purser has just mentioned is not a planning consideration. She asked were English Heritage involved in any discussions? David Rowen responded that English Heritage or Historic England are only consulted on certain applications so development within the setting of a Grade II Listed Building would not be an application that they would be consulted on.
- Councillor Benney expressed the opinion that a proposal on this site could be worse and if it is refused today it could come back full of houses. He feels that this is a compromise, with it having a good fire break and a break for sound and with any other development it would be 21 metres. Councillor Benney acknowledged the objector's point of view but feels these would be nice bungalows and would not be empty long, proving a need and, in his view, it is

an application worthy of support.

- Councillor Marks agreed, he has looked at the application and asked would he want to live there and he would in both properties as he does not think with bungalows there will be any overlooking, they would likely appeal to older people so noise will not be an issue and the likelihood of having fires or bonfires or fireworks is fairly negligible but there is always that risk but there is the same risk with all the other properties in the vicinity. He is leaning more towards supporting this application.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough referred to a comment that was made that if committee refuse it and the future of the site and made the point that members have to stick with the application that is in front of them today.
- David Rowen referred to the separation distances, with some of the separation distances being referenced being amenity standards and amenity is not being looked at here it is the setting of a Listed Building and within the report there is a definition of setting that is given by Historic England and that setting varies from Listed Building to Listed Building so in some instances there will be a new build very close to a Listed Building because that reflects the historic pattern of development but here it is considered that the setting is the open space around that building and that is encroaching into that open space detrimentally impacting upon that setting. He continued that whether that land has been in the ownership of the Listed Building historically is not relevant, land that is in multiple separate ownerships can still form part of the setting of a Listed Building. David Rowen stated that if members are minded to grant the application, he would remind them of the legal duty set out in the officer's report that within the 1990 Listed Building Act that "Local Planning Authority when considering development should pay special attention to preserving a Listed Building or its setting" so the lawful duty on a Council is to give great weight to preserving the setting of a Listed Building. He added that, if members are minded to grant the application, within that context he would advise that any reason for doing that needs to be clearly articulated and set out in respect of the public interest benefit or balance to ensure it is a robust and unchallengeable decision.
- The Legal Officer confirmed that what David Rowen has said is correct, there is a legal duty to pay special attention to preserving the setting of a Listed Building so if members decide that this proposal can proceed notwithstanding some degree of harm to that setting then they must explain whether they think that level of harm is low enough to justify the proposal or whether there is a public benefit to overcome the harm that is involved. He stated that setting is not the same as ownership, with the two being separate concepts so the setting of a building transcends its ownership and ownership is irrelevant.

Proposed by Councillor Sennitt Clough to go with officer's recommendation to refuse the application but no seconder was forthcoming.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Gerstner and agreed that the application be GRANTED against the officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel it will not detrimentally harm the setting of the Listed Building with there being sufficient space around it, it is relevant land use for this site and houses are needed within Fenland.

(Councillor Purser declared, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he had been lobbied on this application)

P6/25

F/YR25/0211/PIP

LAND NORTH WEST OF 1C EASTWOOD END, WIMBLINGTON

PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE TO ERECT UP TO 4 X DWELLINGS INCLUDING THE FORMATION OF A NEW ACCESS

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall stated that this is a Principle in Planning (PIP) application and he is pleased to see it recommended for approval. He referred to the points that the objectors have raised, where they are saying that trees are being removed but there are no trees being removed as part of this application, all the trees that can be seen in the photos surrounding the site are not even owned by this applicant and are owned by someone completely different.

Mr Hall expressed the view that the site is not in the open countryside, there are various built out and approved residential developments abutting this site and when he visited the site on Friday 23 May the new footpath that has been approved is being set at the moment linking in to the bypass. He referred to the plan on the presentation screen, which shows the site and other sites that have been approved or built out in the vicinity, making the point that the character of the area is changing all the time.

Mr Hall stated that he has submitted an indicative drawing to give members an idea of what might be proposed at the next stage if this application is approved, which shows low density development similar to the other sites at Eastwood End. He feels the officer's report sums up the application very well, with good service being received from the officer and it is being recommended for approval and other applications in Eastwood End have been supported, in some instances by officers and some by members.

Mr Hall stated that the site lies in Flood Zone 1 and there is an existing access, which they are proposing to widen and improve, with the applicant owning the house immediately adjacent the access so it can be carried out, with there being no highway objection or other technical objections.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that this is a good application, others have been approved in this vicinity and this will probably be the last piece to complete that whole area. She stated that she supports it.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that he agrees with Councillor Mrs French, it is an on-going building out of the area, with this application just a PIP so there will more details come along which can be discussed at a further planning meeting if it comes to the committee.
- Councillor Benney agreed, stating this is a PIP application, it is not known what the details will be and this will come forward in a later application and others have been passed in the area.

Proposed by Councillor Gerstner, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.

(Councillor Marks declared that the applicant is a customer of a business that he is director of and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. Councillor Benney chaired this application)

(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Purser declared that the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

P7/25

F/YR24/0970/FDC

LAND TO THE SOUTH OF 8 CROWN AVENUE, CHRISTCHURCH

ERECT 1X DWELLING

Members agreed to defer this application for further information to be submitted and considered.

P8/25

F/YR25/0001/F

**SHELTERED HOUSING ACCOMMODATION, ROMAN COURT, LEVERINGTON
ERECT 4 X SINGLE-STOREY EXTENSIONS TO FLATS 3, 12, 13 AND 14**

David Rowen presented the report to officers and drew attention to the update report that had been circulated.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Benney stated that this is a policy complaint application, it is a good solid proposal, with officers undertaking a good job working to get the conclusion before members today. He feels it does not need much debate.
- Councillor Purser agreed, sheltered housing is needed, it is nice and tidy and harming nothing.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Sennitt Clough and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.

P9/25

F/YR25/0072/F

5 ROBINGOODFELLOWS LANE, MARCH

**CHANGE OF USE FROM DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT/CLUB TO 3NO FLATS
INVOLVING THE REMOVAL OF EXTERNAL STAIRCASE**

Alan Davies presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall stated that the officer's report highlights that there had been a previous approval for the conversion of the first floor to a residential flat and the proposal before the committee also includes that as well. He made the point that the application site is located in a built-up residential area and, in his opinion, that it will be classed as a town centre location.

Mr Hall explained that when he submitted the application as part of the submission, he included a list of public houses and clubs within March, and there are 14 other drinking establishments and clubs with Wetherspoons probably being the largest one which is located 170 metres away from the application site, with the business which used to operate from the application site having been closed for 12 months. He stated that he has reviewed some of the comments made by the local residents as the site is surrounded by residential properties and the site it is located right next door to people's gardens.

Mr Hall explained that the existing parking space will be utilized as there is a space available and the Highway Authority have not raised any objection and the existing bin storage will be kept and there have been no concerns highlighted. He referred to the first floor windows and the ground floor windows located to the front of the property where concerns have been raised are already in place and on the rear elevation there is a staircase and a door and the proposal plans to remove that due to the fact that when you stand on the staircase then you can see into three of the surrounding gardens.

Mr Hall stated that the former landlady is in support of the proposal, who was the landlady of the business for 14 years, and as stated in the officer's report she has confirmed that the business closed as it was not viable to continue and was closed down prior to the applicant purchasing the building. He explained that there are no technical objections to the proposal from any of the consultees to the application and within the officer's report it makes reference to space standards, but stated that the application is for a conversion and, therefore, he will be working with the existing structure and has no plans for it to be extended as there is very limited room, making the

point that he intends to keep the outside of the building as it is.

Mr Hall stated that the officer has pointed out that flat one and flat three are satisfactory but flat two is below standard and referred to another application for three flats in Norfolk Street in Wisbech from 2019 which was recommended for approval and was supported by members of the committee, with that proposal being for three new flats and flat one was 38 metre squared which was below standards. He explained that flat 2 was 41m squared which was 2 bedrooms and was below standard and flat 3 was 46 metres squared and was also below standards and he stated that all areas on the current proposal are all in excess.

Mr Hall expressed the opinion that the site it is not in a rural location, it is located in the middle of the town centre and surrounded by residential properties. He expressed the view that he believes that there some benefit to residents as opposed to what is there now as there is an external staircase which currently abuts neighbouring amenity for three properties and overlooks their gardens as well as an external door and he explained that this staircase will be removed.

Mr Hall added that by changing the premises to residential will mean that there is less of a noise issue in a built-up area and the officer report states that it does not have an overbearing impact, and it is very detailed with regards to the openings on all elevations. He expressed the opinion that by converting the building from a closed drinking establishment to residential usage it will mean that it will match in with the character of the area and, therefore, be residential development all round.

Members asked Mr Hall the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked why the commercial business has not been advertised for sale? Mr Hall explained that he has spoken to the applicant who has advised him that the site was advertised for six months with Maxey Grounds before he purchased it. He added that he has not advertised the building since as the business has been closed and it was not felt that it was viable to reopen the business and, therefore, a marketing exercise was not undertaken.
- Councillor Gerstner questioned that when the building was trading as a drinking establishment was a trade waste collection in operation? Mr Hall stated that there does appear to be a large commercial sized bin at the site as well as a brown bin and anticipates that they will be kept or there will be separate bins for residents if the application is approved. Councillor Gerstner stated that as the proposal is for three flats there is the possibility of there being three bins for each flat along with food waste. Mr Hall explained that when it was a drinking establishment, they did also serve food which would have resulted in food waste. He added that he would look to ascertain advice from the Council's refuse and recycling team with regards to waste collections and bin requirements. Councillor Gerstner made the point that there is the potential for all bins to be placed out on the pavement on collection days. Mr Hall confirmed this to be correct.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that there will not be three brown bins at the site as the properties will not have gardens.
- Councillor Benney stated that the point had been made that the property had been marketed by Maxey Grounds for six months and he asked whether that had been prior to the applicant purchasing the building or was it marketed after that for six months? Mr Hall stated that it is his understanding that it was prior to the applicant purchasing the site.
- Councillor Mrs French asked whether the site is still on the market? Mr Hall confirmed that it is not.
- Councillor Marks stated that it is being referred to as a drinking establishment but to him it sounds more like a club, rather than a walk in off the street pub and he asked whether it was a member only club meaning that the members have now gone elsewhere? Mr Hall explained that it is his understanding that the premises was used for events including quiz nights, pool and darts where it was members only. He added that prior to its closure, people could just walk in off of the street, but there were some instances where it was for members

only.

- Councillor Sennitt Clough referred to the floor space of the flats and the fact that one of the flats does not meet the required standard and another which does not have any storage area. She asked whether it was just the internal design of the building which was not followed through without changing it drastically? Mr Hall stated that he would agree and added that he has tried to work around the existing structure that is there, with two out of the three flats complying, and one does not.
- Councillor Marks asked for clarification as he was under the impression that it was two flats which were not compliant? Alan Davies explained that there is one flat which does not comply in terms of overall space standards (flat two) and flat three complies with the overall requirement but does not have any built-in storage space, with nationally described space standards having two elements, one being the overall floor space and the other being the storage. He explained that officers would give more consideration to the overall floor space and flat three does not have built in storage space but that could be rectified because the floor space for flat three, which is a first-floor flat, is more than sufficient in terms of combined space standards of overall space.
- Councillor Marks asked for the square meterage of the flat which does not meet the space standards? Mr Hall explained that it is just over 58 square metres.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked, with regards to the flat which does not have adequate floor space, what are the legal and safety implications of that? Alan Davies explained that when considering the national described space standards, there is a requirement to ensure that all future residential development has a minimum floor space, it is not legislation but is national guidance and, therefore, it is incumbent on each local authority to adopt the guidance. He added that the Council have not adopted it as a policy, but it is generally used as guidance to determine planning applications to ensure that future occupants of any residential scheme have sufficient amenity space. Alan Davies continued that with regards to fire and building regulations they are all separate matters.
- Councillor Purser stated that there is only one parking space for the three flats and it is his understanding that it is not a requirement to provide any parking spaces, but he asked for clarification. Alan Davies stated that the application is for three flats, the actual parking standards are 1.25 parking spaces per dwelling which is far more than what is currently provided. He added that as part of the application the Highways Authority have been consulted, and they are happy with the one parking space and have raised no objection. Alan Davies made the point that the site is in the town centre and, therefore, there are facilities within a walkable distance, as well as connections to sustainable transport and, therefore, there are no concerns with regards to the under provision of parking spaces.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that it is a town centre location and at the top of the road there are 15 car parking spaces which belong to the Council and 72 car parking spaces in Darthill Road. She added that she does have concerns over the size of the flats as there is a lack of compliance and she added that it is a shame that the application is not just for two flats as it would have had amenity space.
- Councillor Marks stated that the committee has in the past approved temporary accommodation in Wisbech which are containers. He added that Mr Hall has explained that the flat which does not accord with national space standards is of a size of 58 square metres, however, a shipping container is 14.86 metres is a lot smaller and that is still being used to house people.
- Councillor Benney stated that, with regards to the non-marketing, whilst he accepts that there is policy, it is the duty of the committee to look at applications and if it is felt that there is benefit in any way policies can be worked around to reach a satisfactory solution. He added that he has visited the site and, in his opinion, the building is a mess and is a blot on the landscape. Councillor Benney added that it has been marketed for six months and now

somebody has purchased it which, in his view, should be welcomed and he feels that the site is never going to open as a pub or a club again as it would never work as a commercial enterprise again and it is an ex commercial premises in the middle of a residential area, which, in his opinion, is crying out for renovation. He explained that he looked at the floor plans and if it was changed into two flats it would never be viable and it would end up being another building in another market town that sits there until it becomes dilapidated, referring to a site in Chatteris which has suffered from a building collapse and questioned whether the residents of March want the same thing to happen to this site. Councillor Benney stated that the application is positive and will bring three flats forward which will provide homes which are in very short supply and whilst he appreciates that they are small flats there are many people who do not want expensive houses to rent, and they just want somewhere to live, and the application will provide that. He stated the fact that it was on the market for six months and eventually found somebody to purchase it is, in his opinion, excellent.

Councillor Benney referred to an application in Orange Grove in Wisbech in 2021 which was developed in the back of a public house in Wisbech and fronted onto the A47, with it being a three-storey building and a new build which, in his opinion, was one of the worst applications he has seen come before the committee. He expressed the view that it appeared to be cramped, and he would not wish to live there but the officer recommendation was for one of approval and it was not up to the same standard as the application being determined now. Councillor Benney referred to the national space standards, making the point that they are only guidelines and do not have to be adhered to and, in his view, not to pass this application would be remiss of the committee and they would be missing an ideal opportunity to bring a building back into use. He made the point that planning is about land usage, and it is an unattractive building, but he questioned what else it could be used for and it could become a blot on the landscape. Councillor Benney stated that the site was marketed, somebody bought it after 6 months who has decided not for it to be a pub but for it to be converted to flats and that is what the building lends itself to and he can see no reason why it should be refused.

- Councillor Mrs French stated that the benefit to the wider community needs to be considered and by removing the external staircase it will restore privacy to the three individual properties who have suffered from overlooking. She added that the Buffs Club was there for many years, and does not know how the external staircase was ever allowed, and she does feel that the application will be of a benefit to the community.
- Councillor Marks stated that he agrees and the benefit to the community is also not having a building which is going to stand empty for a long period of time as it could encourage squatters and become at risk of arson attacks. He added that there have been other premises empty for a period of time such as the George Public House which has been empty for seven years and although it has been marketed nobody has chosen to purchase the site. Councillor Marks added that the benefit to the community will be for the premises to be changed to flats rather than in its current state.
- Councillor Purser stated that by turning the empty building into flats will be a far better viable proposition although he would have preferred to see it converted into two flats rather than three.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that he wholeheartedly agrees that the building should be converted into flats which will be of benefit to the community. He added that he would prefer to see the building converted into two flats rather than three and made the point that whilst he does not know the details concerning the viability or how much the building has cost the applicant or how much the conversion is going to cost, the applicant will know that himself. Councillor Gerstner stated that the application is recommended for refusal by officers and should the application be refused and come back to the committee for two flats then he would fully support that, but in its current format for three flats he cannot support it.
- Councillor Benney stated that to convert the building into two flats would mean that they would be larger but for anybody to do anything to a property does mean that they need to make money out of it and if they do not make money then it does not come to fruition. He expressed the opinion that if this application is not approved then the building will end up

falling down and nothing will happen with the site and why should something positive be refused which will bring a building back into use. Councillor Benney added that the building is not a new build, and the applicant is working with the existing constraints and there is no possibility to add an extension to bring the building up to the national space standards as it would not work. He questioned whether members want to see another blot on the landscape in March which is what will happen should the application not be approved, with there being a need for housing and the need to bring this type of building back into use. Councillor Benney added that if the application is refused then the town of March will suffer.

- Councillor Marks stated that Collingwoods is located just around the corner, and it is scruffy, making the point that when considering the significant investment which has been spent on the rest of the town when you compare the Collingwoods corner which has a dilapidated building and is going to rack and ruin, it lets down the town. He made the point that he is pleased to see that the George Public House has been purchased and will tidy that end of town up and he agrees with Councillor Benney that if something is not done with the application site then it will end up being a blot on the landscape if something is not done with it very soon. Councillor Marks also reiterated the point that Fenland is also short of houses and homes for young people to afford to live.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough added that she did have concerns over the floor space but the application before the committee needs to be determined and, in her view, the good far outweighs the harm and she will support the proposal.
- David Rowen stated that planning is an evidential process and part of the problem with this application from an officer's perspective is that the lack of evidence which has been provided to officers. He explained that it has been stated during the agent's presentation that the building has been marketed, but nothing has been submitted as part of the application. David Rowen added that members have debated the issue of two flats as opposed to three but there has been no information submitted and, in his view, officers are working in the dark and to a degree the committee are as well. He stated that speculation about the condition of the building and what may or may not happen to it in the future is not material to the determination of the application and the building has only been vacant for a year and does not appear to be in any sort of structural disrepair. David Rowen made the point that given the evidence that policy requires which would justify the lessening of the space standards then ultimately it might have led to a different officer's recommendation.
- David Rowen stated that with regards to comparisons made to other sites, applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and added that reference has been made to Orange Grove in Wisbech from 2019 which was a vacant site within a Conservation Area and weight was given to developing what was an eyesore. He added that members have also referred to the size of homeless accommodation in Wisbech and explained that the containers were very much units which were for people whose only option was to live on the streets, and they were interim accommodation as opposed to potentially longer-term accommodation as the application before the committee today. David Rowen expressed the view that there are distinct differences between the current application and some of the other cases that have been highlighted, making the point that there has been no evidence provided to support a lot of the issues that have been raised by members as justification for granting the application.
- Councillor Benney stated that he understands the points made by David Rowen as officers are guided by the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, however, he added that the committee are in place to look at the overall proposal and to consider the community benefit in parts of this which is the softer side of planning. He added that he fully understands the decision which officers have made with the application, but whilst he appreciates that there are policies, there also has to be an element of common sense and there is compassion within planning and this is the compassion being considered in this case where the building can be saved from going into disrepair and from being a blot on the landscape.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Sennitt Clough and agreed that

the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel by bringing the building back into use there will be a community benefit and it will provide much needed housing and the National Space Standards are only a guideline, and other applications have been approved previously which are smaller, with the Council having a duty to provide housing.

(All members present declared that the applicant is a fellow councillor, but they do not socialise with him and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillors Mrs French and Purser declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they are members of March Town Council but take no part in planning)

(Councillor Purser declared that the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

P10/25

F/YR25/0156/F

SHARMAN FABRICATIONS, GAUL FARM, GAUL ROAD, MARCH

ERECT 1 X SELF-BUILD/CUSTOM BUILD DWELLING AND ERECT 1 X STORAGE SHED INVOLVING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING SHED AND STABLE (B2)

Alan Davies presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall explained that the proposal at the site is for a shed to expand the existing business and an occupational on-site dwelling, which is not a separate residential dwelling but is a dwelling tied to the existing business which has been at the current location since 2004. He stated that originally the business was located off of Gaul Road at a Council depot which was sold and the business relocated to its current site, being a fabrication business which makes and repairs various steelwork products which are predominantly play equipment, gates and structural steelwork and the business also works with local businesses to carry out repairs to vans, lorries and trailers.

Mr Hall made the point that out of hours working does take place and on HGV repairs and trailers which can often be an emergency repair at any time, with the work being usually UK based for the play equipment, structural steelwork and gates with the occasional component sent abroad. He explained that the HGV and trailer repair work is generally local work for local businesses.

Mr Hall stated that the application is for an occupational dwelling tied to the existing building and they wish to remain at the same location as it is established at this site rather than move the entire business which is why other sites have not been looked at. He made the point that there are no technical objections and no local objections to the application and there has been support from local businesses including Fen View Motors, Rutterford Construction and Griffin Roses.

Mr Hall referred to the presentation screen and highlighted the application site which is located on the edge of the bypass along with an application he was involved with in 2013 which was for a dwelling in conjunction with an existing HGV repair business which has been built out and is located in Flood Zone 3. He explained that there is also a site on the map which was approved in

2020 by the committee and the agent for the application had advised members that it was for persons to live on site in conjunction with the existing business and that was also located in Flood Zone 3.

Mr Hall referred to the screen and stated that the site located at the south of the map was given approval by officers in 2024 and was for an occupational dwelling in conjunction with the existing rose business. He explained that all of the areas that he has highlighted to members are located on the fringes of the bypass and added that there are no objections to the application and the business wishes to expand further by introducing the shed and also to allow a person to live on the site as an occupational dwelling rather than off site and to allow an office on the site.

Mr Hall expressed the opinion that the dwelling will help to secure the business by allowing persons to live on the site as well as out of hours working including emergency call outs which is carried out at the moment.

Members asked Mr Hall the following questions:

- Councillor Sennitt Clough questioned why it was now felt necessary to build a dwelling considering that the business has been on site for twenty-one years? Mr Hall explained that there are three family members working for the business, Mr George Sharman who started the business is future proofing his business in order that one of his sons can live on the site.
- Councillor Gerstner asked for confirmation that one of the employees of the business will be looking to live on the site? Mr Hall confirmed that it will be one of the sons who will reside in the dwelling and is employed by the business.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that she can see the need for one of the family members to live on the site and she would like to think that the Council supports local businesses. She made the point that throughout Fenland there are properties which are located in isolation, however, she stated that she does have questions with regards to this self-build custom design and whether or not there are any restrictions associated with that.
- Councillor Benney stated that he would like to have seen something included in the application which demonstrates that there is a need on site, there is already a workshop on the site and if there is another workshop then that means that there is going to be more work coming. He added that workplace homes have been passed previously for people who are out in the countryside and this application is located on the other side of the March bypass, with the committee having considered applications in the past and the issue of rural security which is a very valid reason for anybody who has a business and the need for having somebody residing on the site is there. Councillor Benney questioned whether it is a self-build property and added that the building needs to be tied in some way to the business and although the workshop shed is being erected there have been previous applications where there was no justification, and the committee just took the proposal at face value. He questioned whether the business is a genuine family March business which is expanding as there is no evidence to support that fact and he would be happy to support the application if the missing information could be provided.
- Councillor Mrs French confirmed that it is a genuine business and has been in existence and operating for 21 years. She added that she has not seen the sequential test and she would like to see further information so would be happy to see the application deferred for further information.
- Councillor Marks stated that he agrees, and he would also like to see the application deferred as there is not enough information included with the application to make a decision.
- Councillor Purser stated that he totally disagrees with the statement made earlier that the application is an out of character development. He added that he knows some of the family members although he has not seen them for many years and he added that they are a very hardworking family. Councillor Purser added that there have been other applications

approved previously where security has been one of the reasons members have passed applications, with, in his view, it being very important to have a dwelling on site and he will be supporting the application.

- Councillor Marks added that the committee have approved an application in New Road at the Flying Club where livestock were also on the site.
- Councillor Gertsner stated that there have been several applications similar to the current proposal and to be consistent, he believes that further information would have been beneficial, but feels that the applicant has put forward a strong enough case.
- Councillor Benney stated that he does not know the business but if this is a genuine business and you want to erect a shed which is double the size then that could mean that the business could be at risk of more thefts. He added that by having a dwelling on site it will help as a deterrent and with regards to the sequential test there is already a business on the site and, in his view, it is an application with need and a deferment for further information to be provided to the committee would be the best course of action. Councillor Benney added that it is not a self-build, and, in his view, it is a workplace home that should have justification, however, there is not enough information which has been provided to the committee for them to make a decision.
- Councillor Marks asked Councillor Benney whether he was proposing a deferment. Councillor Benney stated that he would like to see the application deferred in order for further information to be provided to enable the committee to decide whether it is a proper business. He added that the application at Wisbech St Mary did not require any financial information, but some further information would provide the committee with some assurance that they are making the correct decision as at the current time there is nothing to support the application.
- Councillor Mrs French added that there is no such thing as a policy for workplace homes as it was removed in 2009.
- David Rowen stated that in the design and access statement there is no mention at all of the issue of security or any evidence to support that concern but the issue of whether the business is genuine or whether the employees are hardworking is not a material planning consideration. He explained that there is no real information contained as part of the application which sets out why a dwelling is required on site, why somebody needs to live on site and why it is essential that somebody lives on site. David Rowen added the application does not contain any details with regards to how the building has operated for 20 years and why it is now necessary to have a dwelling and it does not contain any information with regards to the financial viability of the business. He made the point that effectively officers and the committee are determining an application with minimal details and added that, whilst the committee may have made similar decisions elsewhere, there are examples of dwellings that have been granted tied to businesses but applications need to be considered on a case by case basis given that the ethos behind this area of planning is to respond to the needs of the specific business. David Rowen expressed the opinion that the application before the committee has very limited information on which to base any kind of positive decision.
- Councillor Mrs French agreed that there is a lack of information, and she stated that the committee approved an application which was recommended for refusal and at that time the applicant was present at the committee and was able to respond to members questions. She added that in this case it is a shame that the applicant is not present to answer members questions, and she would like to see the application deferred.
- Councillor Benney stated that in terms of security he feels that the application could be supported, and he added that he agrees with Councillor Purser that the application is not a blot on the landscape and the applicant is looking to expand his business. He added that he would like to see some kind of information around the business, including a business plan which shows that they are going to expand the business with the extra shed. Councillor Benney explained that the way the business operates does mean that by living on the premises they would be able to respond to the customer's needs, and due to the nature of the business you would not want to see it located next to a house or in the middle of a

housing estate. He added that it is in the right place if the criteria around it is correct which is why he would like to see further information.

- David Rowen stated that an economy statement has been submitted as part of the application which does indicate that there will be no additional jobs created as part of the proposal. He added that there have been other instances where the committee have made decisions due to lack of information being submitted as part of the application process and ultimately it is the responsibility of the agent or applicant to provide that information. David Rowen added that he does have concerns that the committee are effectively giving applications that are lacking in information a second chance rather than incentivizing people to get it right the first time with the information.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that there are several dykes and ditches near the application site, and she attended a March Third Internal Drainage Board which is the drainage board for this area and, therefore, she does have concerns.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that the committee are asking for additional information, the application submitted is not incomplete but requires additional information and the committee are justified to defer the application if they want to.
- Councillor Benney stated that it would be very difficult to put every single possibility of information in an application as it does cost money and sometimes officers approve applications where some of the information provided is not required, however, it has cost the applicant money to obtain it. He questioned how much information an applicant has to pay for to satisfy every aspect of the application form and he suggested that maybe feedback be provided to applicants before an application comes before the committee, which could alleviate some of those issues.
- Councillor Marks stated that the extra information will help him to inform his decision.
- David Rowen stated that planning policy is quite clear on the tests which need to be undertaken to demonstrate that such a dwelling is acceptable and that is set out in the Local Plan and the NPPF. He added that this is not a new issue, or a new area of legislation and the tests have been established for quite some time and because of that it really is incumbent on agents and their applicants to submit the relevant information. David Rowen explained that the information provided does not comply with any of the policy boxes and, in his view, it does need highlighting.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be DEFERRED for further information to be provided to demonstrate the operating model of the business, including details of the expansion, to prove that the business is viable and to substantiate the need for the dwelling on the site including evidence to prove that the employees listed as working there actually do.

(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillors Mrs French and Purser declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they are members of March Town Council but take no part in planning)

(Councillor Purser declared that he knows of the applicants and the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

P11/25

F/YR25/0260/F

7 WEST PARK STREET, CHATTERIS

ERECT A SINGLE-STOREY REAR EXTENSION INVOLVING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING CONSERVATORY

F/YR25/0261/LB

7 WEST PARK STREET, CHATTERIS

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL WORKS TO A LISTED BUILDING: SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION INVOLVING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING CONSERVATORY, INSTALLATION OF NEW GATES AND AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP TO SIDE OF DWELLING AND REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING SASH WINDOWS WITH NEW TIMBER SASH WINDOWS

Alan Davies presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Duncan and Sarah Worsley, the applicants. Mrs Worsley stated that the applications are similar to previous applications which have been made in 2024 which were due to come before the committee, however, due to some confusion the 2024 applications were declined in March 2025. She explained that in July 2024 she met with Sam Falco, the Conservation Officer, with the principles of the extension being discussed as well as reviewing the historic fabric of the house and various options were discussed with an extension on the left-hand side being discarded due to the requirements to leave a one metre gap between the neighbour's extension and a lack of natural light in that area.

Mrs Worsley explained that at that time everyone's preferred option is what has formed the application and is on the right-hand side of the house, with the current applications including more historic fabric being retained such as keeping the existing door in its current location and a smaller opening created into the new kitchen area. She explained that there are no local objections to the scheme from people who live close to the proposed extension and alterations and Chatteris Town Council have not objected to the proposal.

Mrs Worsley referred to the presentation screen which shows the scullery, and she added that the Conservation Officer report of 25 April 2025 states that the room has not had a 20th century makeover yet. She explained that the ground floor shower room was approved by the Council and two thirds of the space was converted into a ground floor shower room back into 2016 and the work was completed, with the remains of the scullery no longer being fit for purpose, it is a damp dark space accessed via the shower room and it is not currently being used to the full benefit of the house due to its distance from the current kitchen.

Mrs Worsley explained that it has a modern portioned wall which splits the existing sash window and the window into the scullery bathroom cannot open. She explained that the next slide outlines the front elevation and that the extension will not be seen from the street and the rear elevation which demonstrates a mismatch of materials containing a mixture of brickwork, plastic casement windows and a poorly constructed conservatory and all of these aspects will be significantly improved by the proposed extension with the brickwork being repaired, windows replaced with in keeping sash timber windows and the conservatory will be removed.

Mrs Worsley explained that the next slide shows the proximity of the neighbours extension at 9 West Park Street which was approved in May 2022. She made the point that with the position of existing services and making better use of the existing floor plan, the proposed extension works appear to work better on the right-hand side of the rear elevation.

Mrs Worsley explained that the next slide depicts a street sketch view which shows how the proposed extension will be viewed when walking south along West Park Street and, in her opinion, with existing fencing and vegetation to the front of 5 West Park Street the impact will be minimal, and views of the rear garage block and the old dove cote will still be maintained. She made the point that the proposed extension will be flat roofed and the existing stained-glass window at the stair landing will be retained.

Mrs Worsley explained that a simple coping stone to the parapet will run around the extension and will offer a sympathetic detail and with brickwork chosen to match the existing brickwork on the

main dwelling. She explained that a sympathetic roof lantern will provide additional light into the new space, and the proposed extension and alterations will be sympathetic to the house and will improve the existing dwelling which will provide accommodation fit for a modern family and offer a positive addition to the Listed Building which will be of public benefit when viewed from West Park Street.

Mrs Worsley made reference to section 10 of the officer's report where it states that the single storey extension would result in lesser substantial harm to the significance of the Listed Building and its setting, adding that there is a small section of the existing fabric which is being removed, however, in her view, that must be viewed against the wider benefit of adapting the house to modern living standards. She stated that she does not believe that this has a significant detrimental impact on the Listed Building and asking members to consider the benefits of the scheme along with the largely supporting nature of the Planning Officer's comments and go against the Conservation Officer's recommendations, with the scheme being a sustainable development and according with the development plan as a whole.

Members asked Mr and Mrs Worsley the following questions:

- Councillor Marks stated that Mrs Worsley had referred to 'everyone' being in agreement and asked whether that included the Conservation Officer? Mr Worsley stated that it did. Councillor Marks asked why they think that the Conservation Officer has now changed their mind? Mr Worsley stated that he believes that the next-door neighbours' extension is somewhat out of keeping and he believes that the Conservation Officer wants them to hide it and that is the only reason that they can think of which would make the officer change his mind.
- Councillor Marks asked what the plans are for the scullery and will it be removed or are there plans to reuse it? Mr Worsley explained that the floor in the shower room is above the scullery floor and the floor will be kept and the scullery will be turned into a kitchen. He added that they had proposed to have a drop down to the kitchen to keep it, but the proposal now is to use the brick that will be removed. Mr Worsley stated that it will be fixed as best as it can be and the modern PVC windows will be taken out and replaced with wooden sash windows and, therefore, that side of the house would be restored whilst perhaps doing a small bit of damage to the other side.
- Councillor Benney stated that some people purchase Listed Buildings without knowing what type of property they are taking on and there are other people who purchase Listed Buildings because they like that type of property and they are aware of the additional excessive costs which are associated with that type of property. He added that residents who own Listed Buildings appreciate the value of having a Listed Building or a building with historic value to it, with the applicants changing the brickwork and recycling the brickwork which is being removed. Councillor Benney asked Mr and Mrs Worsley whether they have owned a Listed Building before, and did they realise what they were purchasing or was it purchased as a project with a view to reinvigorate the house when it was purchased? Mr Worsley explained that it is the first Listed Building which they have owned and initially it was not the plan to buy it to add an extension onto it. He made the point that they fell in love with the property, and they like the area which is why they moved and then they considered what they wanted to do with the property by involving their agents who instructed an architect. Mr Worsley explained that they then engaged with the Conservation Officer to gain an understanding of what would be deemed acceptable, and they decided that they would only undertake what works they were allowed to do. He stated that the conservatory is ugly, and they want to have it removed and they wish to keep as much character of the dwelling as possible including the fixing of the scarring and replacement of the windows. Mr Worsley explained that he is looking to restore as much as they can and the scullery is a downstairs bathroom at the moment which is not required as they already have two bathrooms upstairs at the moment and it was added before for an elderly lady who could no longer use the stairs. He stated that consideration has been given with regards to what could be done with that room as it is only usable as it is at the current time as a bathroom

and, therefore, they have decided that it could be used as a larger dining area and kitchen and build an extension out. Mr Worsley added that there was never the intention to rip a Listed Building down and the plan was to restore it as best as possible and try to make use of it as a modern family, especially when nobody has a useable scullery anymore. Mrs Worsley stated that it is their first Listed Building, but they have owned old properties before and have undertaken painting before but not large extensions. She added that they love their home but just want to make it more usable and the current kitchen will be changed into a utility room, with it currently being a very dark kitchen requiring the lights to be on most of the time. Mrs Worsley stated that to build a bigger darker extension there was discussed with the architect and the Conservation Officer but it was seen to be impractical by extending an already dark room into an even darker room.

- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked for confirmation that as applicants they have undertaken the right course of action and have sought advice as well as having a site visit with the Conservation Officer before receiving an officer recommendation of refusal. Mr Worsley stated that is correct and clarified that the officer recommendation was for refusal and was due to come to planning committee, however, it was his understanding that the Chairman wished to undertake a site visit but was unable to do so and because of that the application went to default refusal which cannot be undone and he added that as a result the application has had to be resubmitted.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French referred to the officer's report where it refers to Government planning guarantee, and asked officers to explain what that statement means? She added that she would also like an explanation with regards to the application being refused on the 12 March 2025, however, a period has lapsed, and the application is back before the committee. David Rowen explained that the Government planning guarantee now appears on the majority of committee reports as a response to the issues of 12 months ago and the proximity of designation that the Council was facing in terms of performance on planning applications. He added that with regards to applications that come before the committee that are either due to expire or where the Council are due to give the fee back, the statement is provided for information purposes for members. He stated that with regards to the previous applications which were refused back in March, they were determined entirely in accordance with the scheme of delegation at the time, with one being determined as a straightforward delegated decision and the other was referred to the Chairman and then ultimately determined through the correct paths. David Rowen explained that in terms of the applications coming to committee there was never a guarantee of that happening and they were determined entirely in accordance with the scheme of delegation. He added that now the applications have been returned within a number of weeks and one of the changes is that there are now six letters of support which triggers the applications coming to the planning committee under the scheme of delegation.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that if officers refused the applications that should have been the end of the matter, and she questioned why the applications have come back to the committee ten weeks later. David Rowen stated that a further applications have been submitted, and it has been progressed and due to the scheme of delegation and the fact that there are six letters of support it has to be determined in front of the committee.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she finds that explanation quite surprising, making the point that the first application determined this afternoon took 5 years to come before the committee due to the significant amount of information involved and questioned how an application can be submitted for the exact same thing and be brought before the committee within such a brief period, having been refused on 12 March. David Rowen stated that the theory the application is a house extension which as members are aware officers have 8 weeks to determine and the application which took 5 years was an application for sixteen dwellings with a number of technical issues and there is no comparison.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Benney stated that has been in the yard of the property previously as he knew somebody who used to own it, with front in the Conservation Area being a lovely building, and worthy of conservation and keeping in good order, however, the back of the property is, in his view, a mess. He made the point that the applicants wish to remove the conservatory and replace it with a modern room and in doing so they will reuse the bricks to change the awful bricks which have been used and he assumes that they will use lime and plaster so that it all fits back in and if it is done nicely that is how conservation should be done. Councillor Benney stated that it is going to change the property from the street scene but it is at the back of the house and although it can be seen it is a very minor part and there is nothing to say that it is not going to enhance the street scene. He added that it is dependent on whether it is seen as a positive change, referring to the presentation screen and expressing the view that he can see nothing wrong with the proposal. Councillor Benney expressed the opinion that the building does have protection and does have historic use to it but people do need to reside here and when considering public benefit there are two members of the public who live there and they should be able to have a modern house within a Listed Building, with this being a case of where conservation and a modern building go hand in hand. He stated that you read architecture, with the old building being at the front and you read the back of that building and in 50 years' time you should not be able to tell from the style of the architecture when the changes were undertaken. Councillor Benney referred to a building in Doddington where there is an old building with a contemporary part on the back and that is a lovely building as it the house before the committee. He added that you can tie a Listed Building and put it into a modern context for a modern home and that is what the application does. Councillor Benney explained that some of the back wall is being repaired, and the bricks are being recycled into the fabric of the building. He reiterated that people need to live in the dwelling and the public benefit should be that the people who live there actually end up with a genuinely nice house to live in and not have restraints forced on them by planning applications and planning policy which is more concerned with bricks than it is with people. Councillor Benney expressed the view that this application is a good application, and the changes will enhance the building. He referred to the architecture at the front of the building including the soffits and other features and made the point that those are the things that should be conserved, to take some bricks out of a wall and cover them up with a conservatory should not be seen as detrimental to damaging the fabric of the building, in his opinion, and it is enhancing the building so that in 50 years' time someone will read the architecture of the building. Councillor Benney stated that he sees nothing wrong with the application whatsoever.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to the presentation screen and expressed the view that she finds the conservatory to be appalling. She made the point that she is more concerned with the neighbours and questioned whether the extension at the neighbouring property received planning permission or was it permitted development. Councillor Mrs French asked whether the house next door is Listed, and officer confirmed that it was not Listed. She added that if the house next door obtained planning permission it detracts from a Listed Building and, in her view, it should be looked at as well.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that she concurs with the points made by Councillors Benney and Mrs French, and added that the applicants have abided by the rules, sought advice and did everything that they could, and it was refused. She added that she now sees an opportunity like other members have suggested to put things right.
- Councillor Benney stated that this makes a mockery of the earlier application with regards to the setting of a Listed Building. He added that, in this case, the extension is located right next door to a Listed Building and questioned where is the consistency because that is the setting of a Listed Building and he questioned whether it enhances the Listed Building which is being looked at because he does not think so. Councillor Benney made the point that the people who purchased the house knew the extension next door was in place and are content with it and the residents who built the extension are happy with it. He questioned how the extension can be passed and agreed that as it is within the setting of a Listed Building it does not work in his view. He added that he knows each application must be

considered on its own merits, but it is very subjective.

- Councillor Marks stated that he agrees with Councillor Benney with the point he made concerning the house in Doddington where the new element and the old really does work together. He added that whatever works are undertaken on this house by taking down the plastic conservatory and adding something nicer it will all match in over a period of time and he cannot see any reason not to support the applications.
- Councillor Purser referred to the adjacent property and added that it is not known whether the house has received planning permission for their extension.
- David Rowen stated that planning permission was granted for the house next door, and he made the point that each application has to be considered on its own merits and each Listed Building has its own setting, and the setting of this Listed Building is very much a residential environment where you would expect buildings in close proximity to one another. He added that some of the criticism of that decision from members is somewhat unjustified. David Rowen stated that with regards to improving the Listed Building there are improvements proposed which the Conservation Officer does support, and he added that the removal of the conservatory and the replacement of the brickwork could actually be done without necessarily needing the extension of the building. He explained that the loss of the historic fabric of the building in terms of the creation of the extension is what the reason for refusal is based on, it is nothing to do with the street scene or front elevation, it is the loss of his historic fabric through the removal of the scullery and through the internal works to create that area. David Rowen referred to the earlier application in relation to a Listed Building and the issue of giving special regard to preserving a Listed Building or a setting, he explained that consideration is being given to works to the fabric of the Listed Building which would, in the view of officers, detrimentally impact upon the historic significance of that building through the loss of that historic fabric and that is the issue. He stated that in terms of public benefit there is no wider public benefit and whilst he appreciates that applicants may get a slightly better standard of living accommodation that is not a public benefit it is a private benefit to those individuals.
- The Legal Officer stated that he wished to remind members that the Planning Code of Conduct requires a development which has been previously refused and if a member wishes to propose approval then that members must explain the change in planning circumstances. He added that as there was a refusal in March 2025 then it is incumbent on the member who proposes approval to explain the change in circumstances and the fact that the previous decision was under officer delegation is not a change in circumstances.
- Councillor Mrs French asked whether the original extension had planning permission? David Rowen stated that as far as he is aware that predates any planning requirements.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she has considered what the Legal Officer has stated and she cannot come up with the justification to go against the officer's recommendation.
- Councillor Benney stated the issues need to be addressed with regards to what the difference is and he agrees with Councillor Mrs French to a certain extent, but he has not looked at the previous application to see what the differences are and, therefore, if there is not a significant difference then that is down to the agent not undertaking their role correctly. He added that the agent should know that there has to be significant changes so that members do not go against their own code of conduct. Councillor Benney added that he does not know what the previous application was to be able to say what is different.
- David Rowen explained that the at paragraph 9.2 of the report it states that the amendments made to the current submission include reducing the opening in the kitchen and the retention of the existing rear door from the hallway which are quite minor changes in the overall scheme.
- Councillor Benney stated that if it was a like for like application then it would have to be refused but by reducing an opening is a change.
- The Legal Officer stated that the Code of Conduct requires a member to point out what significant change in planning circumstances justifies approval.
- Councillor Benney stated that if the committee feel that the change at the opening is significant enough then in their view it is, however, it comes down to how people define

significant. He expressed the view he feels it is significant enough of a change to grant approval.

- The Legal Officer stated that the Code does not define what is significant and it is a matter for members to determine provided that they act rationally and if members decide that something is significant then that is down to them.
- David Rowen referred to the presentation screen and indicated to members that the doorway which is proposed was originally going to be a double door and it is now going to be a single door and that is the only change.
- Councillor Marks stated that this is changing the fabric of the building which is the old building. Alan Davies stated that is correct as it is the historic fabric which forms part of the rear elevation.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that the discussion appears to be focussing on what and what is not significant, and, in her view, she does not think that it is a significant change to warrant an approval. She added that it is a shame, but it is a Listed Building, and she does not feel that the changes are significant.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that she feels that the changes that are proposed bring with them the potential for long term sustainability of the building and there is no damage to the structural integrity, and it creates resilience to the building and is reversible. She added that for those reasons she will support the application.

F/YR25/0260/F

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French to agree the officer's recommendation but no seconder was forthcoming.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Purser and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation of refusal, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.

F/YR25/0261/LB

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Gerstner to agree the officer's recommendation, which was not supported on a vote by members.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Sennitt Clough and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation of refusal, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the changes made in making the opening smaller are significant enough to be different to a previous refusal making this a different application and the removal of the conservatory, reuse of the bricks and replacement of the windows to be more in keeping will enhance the Listed Building, bring benefit to the building and will not have a detrimental effect.

(Councillor Benney declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)

(Councillor Marks declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he attends meetings of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)