

# PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2026 - 1.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Imafidon and Councillor M Purser,

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor R Gerstner,

Officers in attendance: David Rowen (Development Manager), Danielle Brooke (Senior Development Officer), Nikki Carter (Senior Development Officer) and Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer)

**P94/25**      **F/YR23/0697/FDL**  
**LAND SOUTH OF THE ELMS, CHATTERIS**  
**ERECT 152 DWELLINGS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS, TO INCLUDE NEW**  
**ACCESSES OFF THE A142**

Nikki Carter presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Tim Northey, the applicant and Asher Davey, the Highways Consultant. Mr Northey explained that Abbey Mill Homes originally submitted the planning application in June 2023 and he has worked with officers to resolve all technical concerns associated with the application which brings forward an officer's recommendation of approval. He added that the application site has a long-standing housing allocation in the Fenland Local Plan and is the final part of the East Chatteris strategic allocation that remains to be consented, which will deliver a wide range of new housing opportunities in Chatteris including homes which are suitable for first time buyers through to families including affordable homes comprising rental and shared ownership tenures.

Mr Northey stated that the dwellings have been designed to high environmental standards and will incorporate integrated renewable technologies to minimise the carbon footprint, with the proposal bringing high quality sustainable and affordable homes to the local housing market. He explained that the proposal has been designed to ensure extensive connectivity to surrounding areas in order to ensure the use of non-motorised modes of transport and includes pedestrian cycle links through to the Wenny Road recreation ground, to The Elms and onto Wenny Road providing safe and convenient infrastructure connections to local services and facilities.

Mr Northey made the point that cycle links to the adjoining consented residential sites have also been designed into the scheme to ensure permeability between the residential areas once constructed but avoids creating a vehicular cut through to the detriment of resident's environmental quality. He added that the application proposes extensive open space provision which amounts to 25% of the total land area which has been designed to be multifunctional and deliver significant benefits, together with formal and informal recreation opportunities for future residents, these land areas will function to provide sustainable drainage solutions as well as biodiversity enhancements, retention of green corridors and enhancement across the site connecting to newly created habitats.

Mr Northey stated that the application has been the subject of extensive amendments and dialogue over the course of nearly three years with officers, the Highway Authority, the Lead Local Flood Authority and other statutory consultees to ensure a technically sound and high-quality

development proposal is secured on the site and officers have stated in their report that the benefits of the proposal outweigh any identifiable harm and there are not considered to be justifiable reasons to refuse the application. He expressed the view that he hopes that members of the committee are able to support the officer's recommendation following their extensive efforts to work with the applicant on this proposal.

Mr Davey explained that he has been involved with the project for around three and a half years and has reviewed the access strategy and single travel works, explaining that all vehicular access will be taken off the A142 by a new style right turn lane and will be constructed fully in accordance with standard set roads and bridges for a sixty mile an hour design speed. He stated that emergency access will be provided further to the north in accordance with the highway design guide for developments of over one hundred dwellings.

Mr Davey stated that discussions with regards to the principle of these works took place through two pre application submissions with the Highway Authority in May 2022 and July 2022 and as a result two minor amendments were made following those discussions to deliver new pedestrian crossings with refuge islands on the A142. He made the point that the Highway Authority confirmed that they would have no objection to the principle of the access subject to a stage one safety audit and junction capacity modelling and both these items were provided through the application and addressed any concerns raised in the stage one safety audit prior to submission.

Mr Davey explained that junction capacity modelling was carried out using existing traffic flows on the A142 plus development traffic and post development traffic, which identified negligible queuing at the site access with a loss of residual capacity in the junction. He added that, in highway safety and junction capacity terms, the proposed access arrangements were found to be acceptable by the local Highway Authority.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Benney stated that there has been a great deal of emphasis placed on non-motorized transport, but this is a rural area and he is the Ward Member for Chatteris. He added that the only access for the development is off the A142 and, in his view, the access should be off Wenny Road. Councillor Benney stated that this is a rural area and as much as you introduce cycle paths, if you drive to Ely on any morning of the week, where there is a footpath and a cycle way there is hardly anybody using it because people use cars in this area. He stated that because of the development there is going to be four hundred plus vehicle movements a day and there will be multiple movements of vehicles per day, with it being over a mile to the nearest supermarket and as a result people are going to use their cars. Councillor Benney explained that he sat on the bypass the previous evening for over half an hour reviewing the traffic and, in his opinion, he does consider the junction to be safe and he does not believe that the access is satisfactory and he asked what steps have been taken to link in with other developments? He added that he fully supports the development and it is on allocated land, but he does not believe that the access out onto the A142, which is a 60-mph road, is safe. Councillor Benney asked whether there is another access which can be considered as he has significant safety concerns? Mr Northey explained that with regards to access options the land to the north is Council owned land that has been granted through The Elms and that access comes through there, with the committee recently approving a section 73 application that removed the requirement for a connection through to the application site as well. He stated that there is that variation that has already happened in terms of the BCP and with regards to the land to the south, the original plan was under the control of a single developer, however, the relationship fell apart between the landowners and the developer who then obviously took control of the land to the south, which they brought forward their application. Mr Northey stated that there was an indication that they would look to do their own thing and ransom the remaining land area, which as a result there would be a ransom situation which would mean that the site could not potentially come forward and would raise viability issues. He explained that there is no

guarantee that site to the south will come forward and as a developer to ensure that the application is deliverable, he must make sure that there is an independent access to the public highway. Mr Northey stated that for the site the only opportunity is to come off the A142, and he explained that they have been through a thorough and comprehensive process with the local Highway Authority and undertook pre-applications at the very outset to ensure that that was a feasible and viable option. He added that it has been subject to a road safety audit and has been subject to the county's design guides, with all safety issues having been assessed to a standard that should not raise safety concerns. Mr Northey explained that work concerning the highway has been undertaken for over three years through the detailed design and the Highway Authority have no objection to the application. He added that they are not concerned with any safety issues as it has been tracked and assessed from a safety perspective and there are no concerns.

- Councillor Benney stated that reference has been made with regards to accessing land to the south and he is aware that the landowner has put applications in to develop on this land and he may have land which could be used as an access point. He added that Mr Northey has made the point that the application is compliant, however, he still has very serious concerns as do Chatteris Town Council and he has been made aware that it was a unanimous vote from the Town Council as they are not happy with the access because they deem it to be dangerous. Councillor Benney expressed the view that it is going to be a community within a community because it has no connection back to the town and, in his view, even if footpaths are introduced it will not stop people from using their cars. He expressed the view that sustainable transport is fine, but in reality it does not work. Councillor Benney asked Mr Northey to clarify that, should the application be approved, is he going to look to seek an alternative access which would appease the local councillors and is he going to look to work with the other sites to try and bring them together as a whole in order that his application can be accessed via the other sites on Wenny Road? Mr Northey explained that there is an emergency access arrangement to the Wenny Road site, but the link does not exist at the current time, with the link being provided for both pedestrians and cyclists but at the moment it is not proposed as a vehicular access. He explained that there could be scope in the future but it would be subject to further scrutiny from the Highway Authority with regards to what the impact would be on Wenny Road with vehicles directly accessing that as well. Mr Northey stated that there is a future arrangement where that could happen but currently it is only an emergency access position which is agreed.
- Councillor Marks stated that Mr Davey had referred to the subject of capacity and had made the point that, in his opinion, it is within capacity, and he asked for clarification as to what Mr Davey deems to be the maximum capacity. He added that having sat on the bypass with Councillor Benney and Councillor Connor, they had all observed the traffic and saw that most vehicles were slowing down coming out of another junction and having to slow down. Mr Davey stated that the maximum capacity is always dependent on the actual design of the actual junction itself but there is a lot of residual capacity with no more than one vehicle queuing at any time through the junction turning right into the site. He added a modelling exercise has also taken place with regards to capacity on junctions either side of the access road on the Wenny Road and A142 junction and the A142 junction to the north, with both of those having been assessed with junction modelling software which demonstrates that there is not an increase in queuing as a result of the developments and there is no significant impact on the operation of those junctions.
- Councillor Marks stated that he had witnessed vehicles traveling along that road which were having to slow because vehicles were either turning left or right off that road and they were slowing and some were having to actually stop on occasions, with more vehicles being released onto the roadway both left and right he questioned what the implication is likely to be. Mr Davey stated that it will still have the same impact and people will still slow down when people turn left but it is still a through route so it is not going to severely impact the flow of operation of that junction. He explained that there are 123 movements in the morning peak hours and 103 in the evening peak, which is one vehicle every 30 seconds and there

are plenty of gaps in that period where drivers can judge whether it is safe to carry on their route or turn right or left into the access.

- Councillor Marks asked for clarification that there are 103 movements per hour which is the figure which has been identified as part of the audit. Mr Davey stated that is the number of vehicles that the development generates in terms of additional vehicle movements and that has also been modelled which demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity in the network. Mr Northey added obviously that the data has been scrutinized by the Highway Authority as well and they are satisfied with the work that they have produced and submitted in terms of that side of things.
- Councillor Connor stated that he sat with Councillor Benney and Councillor Marks observing the traffic for about an hour and during that time there were a couple of near accidents and during the evening rush hour the traffic was fairly heavy. He made the point that the traffic was already heavy without the addition of any additional anaerobic vehicles from the digester further along the road. Councillor Connor expressed the opinion that it is not sensible for the traffic to exit out onto the A142 as it is too dangerous, and he would be concerned if he had to go in there to turn left or right. He asked Mr Davey and Mr Northey what other steps can be taken to alleviate the concerns that members have? Mr Northey explained that there is a ghost island going into the site to enable vehicles going in, there is signage being erected on the A142 and there will be two pedestrian refuges which will have an implication in terms of driver behaviour as it will provide an indication that there are pedestrian users crossing the road. He added that the visibility has all been assessed in terms of safety standards with regards to access in and out and with the realignments of the road widening taking place it should help other road users in terms of basic driver behaviour.
- Councillor Connor stated that it is a 60mph road which is what concerns him and he did not see much driver awareness when he observed the traffic on the evening before.
- Councillor Marks asked whether there was a proper drawing available of the proposed junction itself. Members referred to the presentation screen and Councillor Marks stated that it is his understanding that what is being proposed is there be one lane either way and a centre lane where the traffic will be held. Mr Davey confirmed that the width of three lanes will be 3.5 metres wide and the right turn will be 3.25 metres wide which is compliant with the national design standards and that applies to all trunk roads, A roads and motorways in England. Councillor Marks asked whether there will be any centre islands or will there just be chevrons and it was confirmed that there will just be chevrons.
- Councillor Benney asked whether any consideration had been given to introduce a lane to allow vehicles to slow down and move out of the way and also to allow vehicles coming out of the site to build up speed before they join the carriageway. He further asked whether any consideration was given to introduce speed reduction because he is aware that Chatteris Town Council had investigated a speed reduction scheme several years ago at the New Road junction because of the danger factor. Mr Davey explained that speed reduction was discussed with the Highway Authority during pre-application discussions, but they made it clear that it was not something that they were keen to reduce the speed along that road as part of the development. He added that with regards to the deceleration lanes on the site access plan it does indicate a slightly wider taper which provides vehicles to build up more speed as they are exiting the junction and the right turn lane will have a taper at the end which will allow vehicles to slow as they enter the lane.
- Councillor Benney stated that was introduced at New Road and it does not work.
- Councillor Marks stated that there is a lot of overgrowth around that area, and he asked whether there are plans for it all to be cut back and going forwards who will be responsible for maintenance? Mr Davey explained that all of the vegetation within the visibility splay distance of 218metres to the north and 215 metres to the south will be cleared. He added that the splay will primarily be under the control of the Highway Authority to maintain and there are parts of Abbey Mills land which the splay passes over and that will be dedicated to the Highway Authority to allow them to maintain the vegetation.
- Councillor Connor asked whether a maintenance company will be engaged to undertake

maintenance to the hedges and other associated works with the roads? Mr Northey explained that there are common areas where there will be the need to have a management company and the roads are to be to an adoptable standard. He added that they have been through a detailed design process with the Highway Authority to ensure that they adhere to adoptable standards.

- Councillor Mrs French stated that during the discussions with Highways concerning the road adoption were they made aware that any new road adoptions are now limited to 20mph. Mr Davey stated that is something that they are aware of and there are speed reduction features throughout the development including chicanes and geometry which limits the speed that vehicles can travel through the site.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that during the presentation provided it was mentioned that first time buyers would be prioritised, and he asked what plans have been introduced in order to stop developers from snapping up the development as Chatteris is a growth town and the emphasis is to keep it as it is. Mr Northey explained that he was making the point that the development will provide smaller properties to make them more affordable for first time buyers, which includes in the scheme affordable housing with shared ownership which will make it easier for people to get onto the housing ladder along with rental properties for those people who are on the housing register. He added that there are a full variety of house types to ensure that the development is compliant with the Council's housing policy mix and everything from 2 to 5 bedroomed homes will be included with the main emphasis being placed on the 2 and 3 bedroomed houses where the greatest housing need exists in the district.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that with regards to the roads being brought up to an adoptable standard how long following completion of the development will it take before the roads are passed over to the Highway Authority? Mr Northey explained that he anticipated that the development programme will take in the region of 3 years from commencement of works until completion of 152 homes. He added that he appreciates the concerns members have with regards to the access but at the current time that is the only access opportunity that there is which is off of the A142 and there is no road access that exists to adjoining land areas which at the current time can be secured through the site.
- Councillor Marks asked for clarification with regards to what policy will be in place for ensuring construction vehicles do not bring mud out onto the roads? He added that there are likely to be a number of slow vehicles pulling out onto the highway which are loaded lorries entering and exiting the site and asked what policy will be put in place for holding lorries that want to enter the site overnight and whether there will be parking measures put in place immediately to ensure that there are no lorries parked on the road? Mr Northey explained that there is a condition proposed for a Construction Management Plan which will include wheel washing. He added there is the intention to try and use most of the spoil on the site for raising and lowering the levels across the site and as a result it is hoped that there will not be as many vehicle movements of loaded lorries as perhaps there has been on other sites. Mr Northey explained that protocol will be followed to ensure that there is no mess on the roads and the visibility splays will need to be put in at the outset to ensure that there is good visibility in order for lorries to pull out and there will be a thorough detailed plan in place prior to the commencement of construction which the Council can control and ensure that the development is compliant.
- Councillor Benney asked that, should approval be given for the application, when would the development commence as it appears that many building sites are shutting down due to increases in building costs and the retail price of houses, in his opinion, is not keeping pace with development and it is getting harder for developers to make money. Mr Northey explained that his company are house builders, and if permission is granted then there is still a legal agreement to be drawn up which has time implications and discharge of pre commencement conditions. He added that dependent on the housing market it would be hoped to start construction sooner rather than later and ideally in 2026.
- Councillor Connor stated that the A142 is a busy road and he does not want to see debris on the road. He added that many developers do not adhere to keeping road surfaces clear

from debris and mud and he expressed the view that he would like a sweeper to always be on site to ensure that the roads are kept clear of mud. Mr Northey stated that he can look to include that within his construction management plan and his company follow best practice, however, he will look to ensure that it can be conditioned so that the Council can include that request.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she finds it hard to believe that the Highway Authority do not support a speed reduction as there have been several accidents along that stretch of road over recent years. She added that the County Council only record fatalities and it took her over 20 years to be able to introduce a speed reduction on the A141 in Westry and she asked why Highways will not support a speed reduction? James Stringer from the Highways Team at the County Council explained that when the pre application was considered in 2022 it was the view of the Highway Authority at that time that they would not support a speed limit reduction. He added that in line with Central Government's stance concerning setting local speed limits, the County Council view is that reducing the speed limit for a particular location or hazard is not that effective. James Stringer explained that by reducing the speed limit just for this particular junction would probably not have the level of impact which they would like it to have but dropping the speed limit more widely along that stretch of road is something that could be considered and since 2022 there have been changes. He stated that the County Council are now considering looking very closely at a national highways trial which is a reduction from 60mph to 50mph on the A47 which is being imposed with average speed cameras and if that initiative provides good results and good compliance then potentially highways will look to replicate similar schemes on many of the A roads in Cambridgeshire including the A142 between Ely and Chatteris. James Stringer expressed the view that he believes that dropping the limit from 60mph to 50mph is an option, but he does not believe that dropping the limit solely for 150 metres around the junction would work but something slightly wider between Wenny Road and on the approach to Slade End is something that could be looked at. He added that if the application is approved and a submission for a 278 agreement is applied for then following the road safety assessments which would need to be undertaken he would not discount that a reduction in the speed limit may well be achieved because of that process.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to a speed reduction which was imposed in 2025 from Gaul Road to Mill Hill and, in her opinion, it has not made much of a difference. She added that the speed has been reduced on the A141 towards Rings End, and she cannot understand why the speed limit on the A142 cannot be reduced.
- Councillor Marks asked whether the road from Chatteris to Ely is a red route? James Stringer explained that it has been signed as High Casualty Route since 2012.
- Councillor Marks asked for clarification of the date when the traffic surveys were undertaken because he has heard 2022 mentioned and that was during the Covid pandemic and many people had not returned to work at that time. James Stringer explained that it was July 2022 when the surveys were undertaken.
- Councillor Marks added that if there are no concerns with regards to that part of the road being seen as dangerous then why is a speed camera in proximity a quarter of a mile further along the road on another junction? James Stringer expressed the opinion that he never classes any road as safe, the highway is a risk environment with some roads having a higher risk than others. He explained that there is an issue with speed compliance which is why the camera is there and that was confirmed by the speed survey carried out in July 2022 which demonstrated that 85% of vehicles travelling southbound are exceeding the speed limit which shows that there is a compliance issue. James Stringer clarified that the survey was undertaken in a southbound direction which will be towards Mepal and northbound is towards Slade End.
- Councillor Connor asked at what time of day was the speed survey undertaken? James Stringer explained that the survey was carried out using an automatic traffic counter survey which is where the rubber loops are laid on the carriageway and they are left there for a

week. He added that the data provided is the average over a whole week taking the whole 24-hour period over seven days.

- Councillor Benney made the point that if this were London then the area would be busy 24 hours a day, but Chatteris is not. He added that all of the traffic which has been counted has been pushed into a very short period and the average is low but at busy times it is very high. Councillor Benney expressed the view that the data is skewed as it does not give a true reflection on busy times which is where the data should be looked at, and he asked whether there is any action which can be carried out to change things? James Stringer stated that in terms of collision data that information is provided by the Police and not from the Highway Authority and it is data called Stats 19 data. He explained that when the Police attend an incident or when an incident is reported to them whilst they may not attend, they retrieve certain information and that forms the basis of the Stats 19 dataset. James Stringer added that the Police only record the data if there is a personal injury collision and he made the point that there is the perception amongst members that there are more incidents than comes out in the data because there will be. He stated that there is no data collected by the Police or any other organisation on incidents that do not result in personal injury and damage only accidents are not recorded and there is no way of those being recorded. James Stringer added that it is a well-known fact with regards to under recording or active collision data, with the Government having just released their road safety strategy and one of the aims from the strategy is to better link data collected from the Department of Transport through Stat 19 data and statistics from Accident and Emergency.
- Councillor Marks made the point that further along the road there is an anaerobic digester which for three months of the year has visits from tractors and trailers 24 hours a day and seven days a week. He added that the data which has been provided is skewed as it does not provide a representation which covers those three months, and he asked officers if they are able to provide data of vehicles that visit the digester? Nikki Carter stated that the information she has is from the current ongoing application, but the indication is that there is already a cap on the vehicle movements which is a maximum of 192 movements entering and leaving the site in any one day. Councillor Marks stated that this figure should also be factored into the data already held.
- Councillor Marks asked for confirmation as to how quickly should a vehicle speed up and he asked what the distance is from coming out of a junction from a dead stop and is there an expectation for a vehicle to speed up along the A142. James Stringer stated that he does not know the answer to that question as, in his view, it probably depends on the driver and the car that they are driving. He made the point that this section of the road is fast as it has a speed limit of 60mph which is the national speed limit and people do drive at 60mph. James Stringer added that the road is super elevated which does encourage a slightly higher speed. He expressed the view that with regards to the design in terms of the ghosted right, it does include two refuge islands on either end for the pedestrian crossings, and it will be street lit and the road slightly widened. James Stringer made the point that as a result the environment will be slightly urbanised and, therefore, there would be an expectation to see average speeds reduce because drivers' perception is that they are driving through an environment where they need to pay slightly more attention. He stated that there is the need to have quite a significant gap especially if turning right due to the need to manoeuvre across not only the northbound lane as well as the ghosted right and then the lane where drivers are trying to enter the southbound lane. James Stringer explained that is what the modelling accounts for and the modelling creates two outputs which includes ratio to flow capacity and level of service, with the proposal not being a big development and as a result he would not expect the ratio to flow figure to be particularly high because there is not the quantum of development. He added that where you would see the issue of cars backing up because they cannot find a gap it would be expected to see that with the level of service figure which is given a rating between A which is very free flowing and F meaning that it is not, with the modelling for the junction suggesting that the level of service score is B and the modelling is an industry standard piece of software which is used across the country in terms of modelling site accesses and junctions. James Stringer made the point that there is

nothing arising out of the modelling which suggests that there is a particular capacity issue with the junction, the road is a very busy and fast road which can manifest itself as a safety issue but in terms of modelling there is nothing that the Highway Authority would have a reason to object on in terms of capacity.

- Councillor Marks stated that modelling shows vehicles going onto a highway, but asked if it takes into account the sweeping bend? James Stringer confirmed that it does and when the transport consultants input the data, they include the geometry of the junction, the lane widths, the environment and also the traffic outbound data with regards to the volume which the software then considers.
- Councillor Marks asked whether that is undertaken by the applicants and not the Highway Authority? James Stringer explained that it is always done by the applicant and is assessed by the Transport Assessment Team.
- Councillor Marks stated that he cannot recall anywhere else in the area which is allowing 154 properties onto a 60mph road and he asked whether there are any other developments which are similar? James Stringer stated that from a Highway Authority perspective, they would prefer that the development did not come off of the A road and any logical person would understand the reasons why you would want to protect the A road for its primary purpose which is to get movement of vehicles from population centre to population centre. He added that the junction has been designed to DMRB standards and has been through a road safety audit which identified three issues which have all been resolved. James Stringer made the point that the junction is designed to a standard and there is no reason in terms of the planning process for the Highway Authority to object to the proposal. He stated that the application only has one boundary onto the public highway network and that is the A142.
- Councillor Marks stated that unfortunately the applicant has land locked himself and the committee are considering the public safety element for road users which, in his opinion, is a material factor. James Stringer stated that the County Council does not have a policy which states that they should be restricting direct accesses on the A road network. He explained that in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Highway Authority can only object on matters where they believe that there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a cumulative severe impact and expressed the view that on that basis he does not believe that the Highway Authority could sustain an objection at an appeal on the pure basis that they would prefer not to have an access onto the A road.
- Councillor Connor stated that the speed survey was undertaken in July 2022 and there will be a planning application coming forwards for an anaerobic digester shortly, there is also a pet crematorium and a planned crematorium a few miles away which also needs to be taken into consideration as the traffic is likely to be slow moving. He added that the applicant has stated that it is likely to be three or four years before the development is built out and then consideration also has to be given to the Fens Reservoir project, although the level of detail concerning that project is quite sparse at the current time, looking forwards there will be additional traffic which will make the road even busier and, in his opinion, that also needs to be considered as it is a major infrastructure project. James Stringer explained that the Highway Authority have not been provided any data by Anglian Water with regards to the reservoir project and what the likely impact on the highway will be, with there being no detail which has been submitted to date with regards to what the trip generation may be and what the impact might be on the local junctions and, therefore, it is difficult to take it into consideration when the data has not been provided and the Fens Reservoir is still to go to the Secretary of State as a formal submission. He added that should the application for the reservoir comes forward then it will be down to Anglian Water to mitigate their impacts on the highway network and they may then need to do more as a result of applications that the committee are approving in terms of residential development in the area. James Stringer explained that the Highway Authority have raised their concerns with Anglian Water concerning the significant concerns that they have with regards to capacity around Chatteris and Slade End roundabout in terms of the impact of Fens Reservoir and the detail concerning the trip generation and trip distribution is not known along with the detail concerning where the majority of traffic will be originating from. He added that when

considering the other committed developments such as the anaerobic digester, the assessment was undertaken on the current development in 2023 which was before the anaerobic digester extension came in and, therefore, the assessments took place with the developments that were relevant at the time. He made the point that there is a general growth in traffic which is always considered in terms of capacity analysis and that system will have considered the Local Plan allocations. James Stringer explained that there is an element of general growth in terms of how much was allocated in the Local Plan which would have been considered but very specific developments and certainly ones that have come after the submission of the current application will not have formed part of the capacity assessments.

- Councillor Marks referred to the growth element and asked what the difference is in the amount of traffic during the pandemic to the current day? James Stringer explained that the Department of Transport undertake lots of traffic counts on the network on a yearly basis and then they apply general growth rates to each one. He made the point that generally speaking across the county, traffic has recovered from Covid, and the level is similar to that of 2019.
- Councillor Marks expressed the view that he does not dispute that statement, but he does dispute the figure from the survey in 2022 which he believes could be a lot less than what there is now which is why members have concerns. James Stringer explained that the Department of Transport figures are based on a manual count which may have been undertaken in 2018, but there is an element of flexibility in the figures and it is useful to be able to compare figures when the ATC data comes forward and the latest Department of Transport data for 2024, estimated traffic on the A142 at the location at just over 11,000 movements. He added that the ATC data which was captured in July 2022 captured 12,500 movements and as a result it is clear that the Department of Transport figures are already underestimating the level of traffic on the A142, it is a busy A road which can take a significant amount of traffic and there are no capacity issues on the A142 at the moment which he is aware of in terms of the free-flowing nature of the road. James Stringer made the point that the road is taking 18,000 vehicles towards Soham and he appreciates that by including junctions there will be an impact when considering the free flowing nature of the road but he does not believe it will cause a particular capacity issue by introducing a new junction or accepting that the ATC data is now two and a half years old.
- Councillor Connor stated that the traffic survey was undertaken in 2022 and he questioned why an up-to-date survey was not carried out? James Stringer stated that the application is slightly unique since it has taken a while to get to a decision point. He added that in terms of asking for an up-to-date survey in the view of the Highway Authority apart from natural growth, there is nothing which has materially changed in the area of Chatteris between 2022 and 2026 in terms of major house building which will have altered the level of traffic on the A142 over and above the estimates that are in place.
- Councillor Connor stated that the figures will continue to increase as the years pass by and the road will suffer from capacity issues. James Stringer stated that it will continue to increase every year as the local authorities across Cambridgeshire continue to approve more houses as required by Government. He added that the assessments which have been undertaken look particularly at junctions and they do not particularly look at the free-flowing nature of the A142. James Stringer made the point that it is acknowledged that there is an issue at the Slade End roundabout and that was made clear to Anglian Water in terms of the Fens Reservoir project and mitigations have been sought on Slade End as a result of other developments, including the 1200 homes approved in March 2025. He expressed the view that in terms of other junctions he does not believe that there are particular capacity issues apart from queuing which there will always be at junctions onto A roads. James Stringer stated that whether or not that manifests itself into being categorised as being classed as overcapacity he does not think that there is a particular issue.
- Councillor Purser stated that he has listened to the discussion so far and he is quite familiar with the road craft manual as far as safety is concerned and he questioned whether the surveys that were undertaken were by traffic counters or was it a desk top survey? James

Stringer explained that it was not the County Council who undertook the survey, it was the applicant and they laid an automatic traffic counter on the road.

- Councillor Benney stated that the traffic survey was carried out in 2022 and is out of date and since then Floor Span have submitted an application in Chatteris along with approval for a distribution centre in Chatteris which has twenty-four loading bays and is being developed. He added that Aerotron have developed phase 2 which is almost finished and phase 3 will then come forwards which will also bring with it more traffic. Councillor Benney explained that as well as the anaerobic digester and the crematorium along with Hallam Land and all of the additional 1200 homes will put pressure onto the A142, making the point that although the data suggests at the moment that everything is fine, the proposed development will not be built for three years and during that time, there is going to be all of the new commercial developments coming to fruition but as the local councillor the developments all bring additional vehicles that will use the road. He stated that he gets asked regularly by residents with regards to what steps can be taken concerning the Apple Green roundabout due to the congestion and he does not want to see the same issue taking place on the A142 and local residents going through the town of Chatteris rather than using the bypass, making the town very congested whereas the bypass is supposed to be in place to alleviate the traffic in the town but the opposite is taking place. Councillor Benney expressed the view that all of the congestion already exists without the extra development which is going to add pressure onto the road and to the junction and the development is only going to make it worse. He asked officers to confirm how many vehicle movements from the new distribution centre, Floorspan and the anaerobic digester plant, which is capped at 192, but is that 192 per day over a year or 192 maximum per day and whether all of these figures have been included into the modelling to ensure the modelling data is accurate? David Rowen stated that the Hallam Land site has been committed for a long time and it is an allocation within the Local Plan, being a planning application dating back to 2010 and he would anticipate that the Hallam Land has been factored into the data that has been submitted as part of the application. He added that with regards to Anglian Water and the reservoir it is not a committed scheme and there are no details of where the infrastructure will be going and no details concerning traffic generation and as such it is not something that can be factored into the determination of the current application. David Rowen made the point that it will be the responsibility of Anglian Water to deal with the mitigation required for traffic generation as a result of their application. He added that with regards to the new and emerging developments such as Aerotron in Chatteris and whether they have significantly and materially changed the traffic flows he would anticipate that the scale of traffic movements that will be generated by those developments would not be sufficient to materially change the modelling that has taken place to date in respect of the current application. Nikki Carter added that with regards to the anaerobic digester, the current application states that the additional trip generation proposed by the development is negligible and falls within the site trip generations limit condition as part of the original planning permission for the site. She added that they are requesting that the same condition is reimposed which is no more than a maximum of 192 vehicle movements shall enter and leave the site in any one day and that records should be kept so that it is enforceable.
- Councillor Marks asked who would check the data? Nikki Carter stated that it would be the Transport Assessment Team. Councillor Marks asked whether officers could confirm whether the data is actually monitored and checked? Nikki Carter stated that as far as she is aware they do as they provide their consultee comments on that basis.

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

- Councillor Mrs French stated that the issue of requesting a sweeper on site has been mentioned and at a previous meeting, the committee were advised that such a request cannot be conditioned, and, in her opinion, she does not believe that construction management plans are worth consideration.
- Councillor Connor stated that this application differs due to the number of dwellings being considerably higher than the application at a previous committee which was only for 15

dwellings.

- Councillor Mrs French stated that Councillor Benney had stated that there was money allocated towards the Apple Green roundabout on the application for 1200 homes, however, that is incorrect as it relates to the 425 dwellings at Barkers Lane and 130 at Lambs Drove.
- Councillor Connor stated that the point Councillor Mrs French has made is correct and added that the area is March East where the monies are coming from to bring the Apple Green roundabout up to date.
- Councillor Marks stated that there has been a great deal of information disseminated to the committee today, and he made the point that he is very surprised the information being worked with is from 2022. He added that it is well documented that people were working from home back in 2022 and at that time the price of petrol reduced significantly to £1 per gallon, which demonstrates how many vehicles were being used on the highway at that time. Councillor Marks added that there are conflicting figures in 2024 and he made the point that James Stringer from the Highway Authority has explained that free flow is not considered and, in his view, there will be no free flow, and motorists will be using their brakes a great deal. He expressed the view that he has no issue with the actual application itself, but he will not support the application where the entry and exit point is currently located.
- Councillor Benney explained that he is a local ward councillor for the area and the application site is in an adjacent ward. He made the point that he welcomes the development and has no issue with the actual development, however, he has significant concerns with regards to highway safety, and he is not happy with the access point. Councillor Benney stated that Chatteris has a very good community feel to it and this is going to become a community within a community, with the houses being devalued by the access point and there are several aspects wrong with the development due to the access. He referred to the officer's report, and it mentions seven times that there are reservations with regards to motorists coming out onto the A142 and the Highway Officer has also stated that the access is not ideal, but it has had to be accepted as the figures are in order, but he disagrees with that because the data is skewed and is out of date. Councillor Benney expressed the view that the application will cause problems for the town of Chatteris and it will not be good for the people who may choose to live on the site, and he will not support the application as, in his opinion, the access is wrong for the development.
- Councillor Connor stated that he has noted the points made by both Councillors Benney and Marks and he referred to the point where Councillor Marks stated that he does not recall any other development which comes out onto a 60mph road and if this is approved then a precedent has been set and, in his opinion, it will be an accident waiting to happen. He added that any vehicle turning left out of the site has got to build up speed and accelerate quickly in order to not impede the flow of traffic and he does not feel that he cannot support the application.
- Councillor Marks expressed the opinion that a red route just flags up danger, and he questioned why vehicle movements are being introduced from a dead stop onto a 60mph road. He added that the developer appears to only have one option for the access and just because that is the only option he does not believe that families should be placed into danger on the road.
- Councillor Connor stated that he would not wish to recommend that any of his family or friends turn out of the junction onto a 60mph road as there will be fatalities caused by the junction.
- Councillor Marks stated that if ever the Planning Inspector reviewed the application then it should be noted that the committee questioned why there is a speed camera located less than a quarter of a mile further up the same road, with speed cameras not being introduced for no reason and they are located where there are known issues. He stated that the speed camera is located on the left-hand side and vehicles pulling out of that junction proves that there must be a speeding issue before vehicles reach the next junction and he added that by choosing to refuse the application he is protecting people.
- David Rowen stated that it appears that members appear to be unanimous in their view

concerning the road safety element of the development but made the point that there are no objections to the application from the Highway Authority and, therefore, should the application be refused and go to appeal then there is a reasonable chance that the refusal would be difficult to defend and could be subject to the award of costs.

- Councillor Benney stated that costs are a consideration and are not a determining factor for a planning application, with the committee present to decide and they are local members who saw first-hand the traffic on the road. He added that the application will most likely go to an appeal, and he would hope that the Council does not lose, however, members were elected by local people to speak up on their behalf and it would be dereliction of duty if they fail to act on residents' concerns. Councillor Benney explained that he does welcome the development, but it is the fact that it will be a community within a community which concerns him as people will not walk and use bikes.
- Councillor Marks stated that he agrees with the points made by Councillor Benney and added that the officers have done a very good job but as a Planning Committee they should consider safety and that should be always put first. He stated that if the developer can reach an agreement with another landowner then the access point would not be out onto the A142. Councillor Marks stated that he would not wish to see the Council be subject to costs if the application went to appeal, but he is aware that applications can be subject to appeals where the Council does not incur costs as has been the case previously.
- David Rowen explained the issue of costs to members and stated that costs are not received because an appeal is lost, they are awarded against an authority where they are deemed the decision-making body to have acted unreasonably. He stated that one of the definitions of unreasonable conduct would be to refuse an application where there is no technical expertise to support that and in this scenario that would be potentially going against the recommendation of the Highway Authority and refusing the application on highway safety grounds would potentially be a scenario where costs could be awarded against the Council.
- Councillor Marks stated that he agrees with the points made by David Rowen, however, the information the committee have been provided is from 2022 and the committee are querying the information which has been provided, with the Highway Officer having also stated that the statistics do not demonstrate an up-to-date position with regards to the current traffic flows. He expressed the view that the pandemic has only added to the confusion and maybe there would have been a different outcome had the proper facts and figures been provide to the committee but at the moment there is too much conflicting information.
- The Legal Officer stated that members do have the option of deferring the application if they feel that there is any further information which they would find to be helpful in the determination of the application.
- Councillor Marks stated that the only information which would warrant a deferral would be for up-to-date data concerning traffic movements to be supplied. He added that a deferral would not change the access point and it would only end up with further facts and figures which would complicate matters and prove that there is more traffic using the A142.
- Councillor Connor stated that it would not be possible for a speed reduction to be implemented during the timeframe if the application was deferred. He added that the committee appear to be content with the development, but it is the access which is causing the concern, and, in his opinion, a deferral will not make any difference.
- The Legal Officer referred to the possibility of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers which could be used by the Council to consider alternative accesses and explained what the powers involved.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that it is her understanding that the committee need to consider the application as it is in front of them and it is not for the Council to look at a CPO which would take in between 2 to 5 years anyway when the Council would cease to exist.

**Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be REFUSED against the officer's recommendation.**

Members did not support the officer's recommendation of approval as they consider that the proposal does not comply with Policy LP15 as the access onto the A142, which is a 60mph road, is unsafe, the road is an identified red route, the traffic data which has been provided is out of date with the traffic survey being carried out during the school holidays and during the pandemic recovery stage and does not reflect the current traffic usage, it not felt that there is a safe vehicular access for the residents and due to the road network is creating a separate community that is not consolidating with the town of Chatteris.

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

*(Councillors Marks registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he attends meetings of Chatteris Town Council but take no part in planning)*

**P95/25**

**F/YR25/0413/F**

**LAND AT WEST FEN FARM, WHITEMOOR ROAD, MARCH**

**INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) FARM WITH BATTERY STORAGE, SUBSTATION AND ASSOCIATED WORKS INCLUDING 3.0M HIGH POLE MOUNTED CCTV CAMERAS AND 4.0M HIGH ACOUSTIC FENCE**

Danielle Brooke presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Callum Wright and Mark Kelly, the applicants, and Mark Hetherington, the landowner. Mr Kelly explained that PACE is a UK headquartered clean infrastructure developer, builder, owner, and operator and he added that he is accompanied by Callum Wright, the Planning Manager at PACE and the landowner and farmer Mark Hetherington.

Mr Hetherington explained that he has farmed here since 2008 along with his brother and he added that his family have been farming the land that he owns in Fermanagh for over 200 years and his son is currently at Newcastle University studying agriculture and hopes to take over the land in due course. He explained that over the last 15 years, he has been operating an intensive beef finishing unit, predominantly growing maize and feed wheat on the proposed solar land which is then fed to the cattle, with the introduction of solar across his farm will see his business diversify from intensive beef production to extensive sheep production and as he comes from a beef and sheep farm in Ireland, it is something that his family and himself are very excited about.

Mr Hetherington added that he believes that he will see an overall increase in sustainable meat production from that land and the financial offering from solar will enable him to farm in a more extensive manner, grazing the land directly instead of intensively farming forage crops fed by artificial fertilizers and chemical sprays. He explained that farming in this way is a well-documented way to improve soil structure, fertility, and organic matter in the soil and not only will the solar income secure the financial viability of his business, but the regenerative approach that that extensive farming will offer will secure the long-term soil health for future generations.

Mr Hetherington asked the committee to recognize the perilous position very many small farms are in today as the supermarkets will not pay a sustainable price for his products and Government is offering farmers less support and without projects such as this, smaller farms like his will cease to exist with every large landowners such as pension funds hoovering up that land. He stated that this will mean far fewer jobs for local people as the land will be run for the benefit of corporations and not communities.

Mr Wright explained that the development of the scheme, Middle Fen Solar, has been an exercise of ensuring all material planning considerations are fully addressed to ensure there is minimal harm while still allowing significant public benefit in the form of clean renewable energy. He stated

that the benefits will enable the powering of 24,000 homes and the displacing of enough CO2 to remove 13,000 cars off the road and he added that the proposal will also bring with it significant biodiversity net gain uplift.

Mr Wright explained that the application was submitted in May 2025 and has been subject to extensive review from the Planning Officer and statutory consultees, with the scheme being amended to include screening so that there is no open visibility of the site to provide finer detail of the construction access and the vehicle routes and to provide clarity on the site selection methodology which justifies the location in consideration of the current and surrounding land uses, with the current position being that all policy requirements have been addressed, and the case officer is recommending approval on this basis. He added that due to the location of the site away from significant public receptors, the application to this point has only received one objection from members of the public notably from a dwelling in excess of 5km from the proposed site.

Mr Wright expressed the view that on many occasions members cite solar schemes as much needed development but only in the right location and he made the point that the current scheme is an example of a solar site in the right location. He stated that there is no objection from any members of public within 5 km of proposed site or from technical and statutory consultees.

Mr Wright added that there has been extensive work for officers to ensure minimal landscape visual impact and no potential for harm to neighbouring amenity in the form of noise, outlook or glint and glare, with the application presenting an uplift in biodiversity through securing a substantial net gain and the proposal will support the farmer by diversifying his business so that they can continue to support the economy and provide business rates to the council. He stated that he believes that the scheme is policy compliant and represent significant public benefit and asked members of the committee to recommend approval for this scheme.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked Mr Hetherington whether he owns the whole 109 acres and does he own land elsewhere? Mr Hetherington stated that he has 500 acres in a square plot, with the application being only for half of the farm, and he also has land in Ireland which his family have farmed for generations.
- Councillor Mrs French asked whether Mr Wright has driven down the road recently? Mr Wright stated that he has undertaken two site visits throughout the determination of the application as well as visiting a couple of months ago. Councillor Mrs French stated that she visited the site and the road is atrocious and she referred to the County Council Highway's report suggesting the introduction of passing places because at the current time there are no passing places. She stated that the road is appalling and in a dreadful state and she questioned whether the passing places will be implemented right from the top near the roundabout as you turn sharp left as the whole road is breaking up. Mr Wright explained that there was one passing place which was agreed with the Highways Officer that there is the intention to implement along the construction route. He added that he appreciates that the condition of the road is not excellent, but he has agreed with officers for a road condition survey to be undertaken before development and then maintained throughout. Councillor Mrs French added that the condition of the road is dreadful and is from the start near the Peas Hill roundabout all the way to the application site.
- Councillor Mrs French asked that, with regards to connecting to the grid, is that connection going to take place underground or overground? Mr Wright stated that they are intending to connect to the point of connections mast via the connection tower and it will be overground.
- Councillor Mrs French asked whether it will be a new pylon? Mr Wright explained that it is a tower adjacent to the existing pylon.
- Councillor Mrs French asked why they are not looking to connect to the March grid instead of going to Peterborough as, in her view, the March grid is in desperate need of upgrading and UK Power Networks do not plan to do anything until at least 2028. Mr Kelly stated that they are intending to connect into a line that supplies to the substation which is what has

been agreed by the distribution network operator and they have little choice into where they can connect. He explained that the benefit that they have with this application is that the point of connection is actually on the application site and, therefore, there does not need to be any cables running across land and roads to reach the connection point. Mr Kelly explained that ultimately there are substations that will be connected to which he believes are in March. Councillor Mrs French stated that is incorrect as it will be Peterborough.

- Councillor Mrs French asked what benefit the application will bring to the residents of March with regards to the sequential test? Mr Wright explained that there is a community benefit fund that is offered to the local Town Council but is yet to be negotiated with them.
- Councillor Marks asked Mr Hetherington whether he farms the land at the present time or is it contract farmed? Mr Hetherington explained that his family farms the land and they undertake most of the tractor work but for specialist works such as combine harvesting, they employ somebody do those works.
- Councillor Marks asked Mr Hetherington to explain where his farm buildings are located? Mr Hetherington stated that they are all on the site along with his house, grain shed and beef yards.
- Councillor Connor asked Mr Hetherington to clarify the point he had made with regards to using the ground to feed his cattle. Mr Hetherington explained that he built beef yards around 15 years ago and they operated for about 10 years but because the beef market has changed it has become difficult to make any money from that and as a result the yards are used when it looks as though they can make a financial return. He explained that they are not being used at the current time, and it is proving harder and harder to use the beef yards because of various pricing issues.
- Councillor Connor referred to the officer's report at 9.23 where it states that the land has been used for anaerobic digestion. Mr Hetherington explained that it as a result of him growing maize because of the cattle being on site and he built a large silage clamp which is quite unusual for the area, and it can hold up to 6,000 tonnes of maize which is needed to feed the cattle when the yard was full. He stated that when there are no cattle on the farm, the maize gets sold to biodigesters and it is a very good bread crop in terms of wheat.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that the Highways Team should be aware of the appalling state of the road which has been in poor condition for several years and it cannot be accessed in a normal car. She asked whether the Highways Officers are seeking passing places along the full stretch of the road or is just outside of the access point? James Stringer stated that, in terms of passing places, the only one being proposed is off of the public highway and is on the private track just as you go in the access and there are no passing places being sought on Whittlesey Road.
- Councillor Mrs French made the point that if there is a HGV using the road there are no passing places for other road users. She added that if the application is approved there will be nothing left of the road which is a County Council highway, and it needs updating as a matter of urgency.

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

- Councillor Mrs French made reference to the March local grid, and added that she has had a farmer contact her a few months ago with regards to seeking assistance as he wishes to site further wind turbines on his land, with the farmer advising her that he has contacted UK Power Networks who has advised him that they will not consider looking at the March grid as it has no capacity to take anything further until at least 2028. She made the point that had the application offered to assist with upgrading the March grid instead of the Peterborough one then she may have considered the application more favourably but, in her opinion, that she cannot see any benefits whatsoever to the residents of March which accompany the application.
- Councillor Marks stated that he cannot understand why applications keep coming forward which mean that good farming land is being lost. He agrees that farming is in a terrible

situation, but the application will remove more agricultural land whether that be for maize or crops and, in his view, it cannot be environmentally correct to cover Fenland in glass and instead the land should be used to grow produce. Councillor Marks stated that if approved it will mean the land is not used for up to 40 years and there can be no guarantees that the company will continue and not fall into administration, meaning that an eyesore will be left, leaving a financial implication for somebody to deal with. He stated that in other areas there are solar farms on land where crops cannot be grown such as hillsides and whilst he does have sympathy with Mr Hetherington due to the poor state of farming, he does have concerns about giving up good land where crops can grow to just implement a glass farm and the land should be left as it is.

- Councillor Connor stated that he does not see the relevance with this application and whilst he appreciates the Government has a policy for green energy, the land is Grade 2 and Grade 3A agricultural land which is good farming land. He added that the land will be taken out of production for the next 40 years and whilst it is unlikely that the committee will be around when the site is decommissioned, members of their families may well be. Councillor Connor stated that if it was scrub land then he could possibly understand the application but in Fenland with high productive fertile Grade 2 and Grade 3 land he cannot see the relevance of the application.
- Councillor Marks stated that he also has concerns about vehicles as it now appears that electric vehicles are the way forwards as opposed to diesel and petrol. He made the point that in the last 18 months it has been put forward that hydrogen is coming forward and appears to be taking over from electric and if that is the case then there will not be the requirement for as much electricity as hydrogen has a lot less by product and will not remove farmland. Councillor Marks stated that he cannot support the application at the present time and especially as it is in the Fens.
- Councillor Connor stated that high grade agricultural land is being taken out of production and whilst it is up to Mr Hetherington where he sells his produce, he could be growing maize for human consumption rather than sending it for biogas which, in his opinion, is not environmentally friendly at all.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to the officer's report where it clearly states at 5.7, pollution, noise and dust as well as the possibility of vibration impacting occupiers of nearby properties and she added that she does not see why those residents should be made to suffer for this type of development. She further referred to 5.9 of the officer's report and she is impressed that the 9 metre buffer strip for maintenance has been considered for the Internal Drainage Board access requirements. Councillor Mrs French referred to the habitat and added that there several badgers in Fenland and should the agent or applicant need to move a badger set the cost implication is around £30,000 and it is a criminal offence not to undertake those works correctly. She referred to 5.14 of the report where it states that the Police have concerns with regards to lighting and they have suggested that there is CCTV and lighting. She made the point that if there is lighting in the open countryside then that will result in light pollution which, in her opinion, is not acceptable.
- Councillor Marks stated that Welney is approximately 8 miles away as the crow flies and he has concerns for migratory birds because if the solar panels are caught by light, it will look very shimmery and resemble a lake or a pond. He added that the committee have been provided advice recently from Natural England who have concerns with regards to the flight path where dwellings were being considered and, in his view, this is more of a concern especially as the Ouse Washes are located nearby.
- David Rowen stated that with regards to ecology, the application has been accompanied by significant information with regards to ecology and there are comments within the report from the Council's own Ecologist addressing the issues. He added that a Habitat Regulations Assessment has been undertaken as part of the application and as part of the consideration of the application and comments from Natural England have been provided raising no objection. David Rowen stated that several issues were raised with regards to how the farmland could and should be used differently which are not really material to the determination of the application and that the material considerations are set out in the report

which is very balanced in terms of how it identifies areas of harm and ways that harm is weighed against the benefits of the application in terms of the overall contribution to renewable energy nationally rather than identified immediate vicinities.

- Danielle Brooke stated that with regards to best and most versatile land (BMV), the site only represents 0.5% in respect of BMV land out of the entire district and 0.01% of BMV land nationally., with the impact of removing the land from arable production being negligible in respect of the overall food production within the district and nation. She stated that the land currently has not been used for some years for food production and, therefore, food security matters are not a material consideration.
- The Legal Officer stated that members need to be mindful of the material considerations when determining the application and should be aware of any reasons for refusal should they go against the officer's recommendation in terms of any potential appeal and any possible cost implications if there is any unreasonable conduct in terms of the reasons should the application be refused.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be REFUSED against the officer's recommendation.**

Members do not support the officer's recommendation of approval of planning permission as they feel that the application will mean a loss of agricultural land and will be detrimental to Fenland's landscape.

*(All members of the committee made an en bloc declaration, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they had all lobbied on this application)*

*(Councillors Mrs French and Purser registered, 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)*

**P96/25**

**F/YR25/0706/F**

**61 HIGH STREET, MARCH**

**ERECT 1 X BLOCK 22 X FLATS AND A COMMERCIAL UNIT, INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA**

This item was withdrawn.

3.30 pm

Chairman