

# PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2024 - 1.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor S Imafidon and Councillor E Sennitt Clough.

Officers in attendance: David Rowen (Development Manager), Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer), Gavin Taylor (Principal Development Officer) and Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer)

## **P63/24      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting of 30 October 2024 were signed and agreed as an accurate record.

## **P64/24      F/YR23/0766/F LAND NORTH OF 129, KNIGHTS END ROAD, MARCH CONSTRUCTION ACCESS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST 201 DWELLINGS AT WEST MARCH (OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION F/YR21/1497/O REFERS)**

This item was withdrawn.

## **P65/24      F/YR21/1497/O LAND WEST OF, THE AVENUE, MARCH ERECT UP TO 1,200 X DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE, PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, ALLOTMENTS/COMMUNITY GARDEN, LOCAL CENTRE AND PRIMARY SCHOOL, INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)**

Tim Williams presented the report to members and drew their attention to the update report which had been circulated.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Colin Male, an objector. Mr Male stated that he is a resident of Knights End Road and is responsible for a petition regarding site access, with Knights End Road now being a through road for traffic that requires access or egress onto or from the A141. He made the point that the road has a 30mph restriction, however, not many users are aware of it or adhere to the limit and the footpaths are narrow and as a dog walker he does not feel safe.

Mr Male referred to the presentation screen and explained that the road serves a large number of houses in the lower Cavalry Drive area and with the new development due to take place in Springfield Avenue, Princess Avenue and the site near Neale Wade School then much of the traffic will find its way onto Knights End Road in order to gain access to the bypass. He explained that Knights End Road is not a road like Wisbech Road or The Avenue as both of those are sufficiently wide to cater for large volumes of traffic, with the road having twists and turns and varies in width whilst narrowing quite considerable near the junction with the A141.

Mr Male referred to the presentation screen and explained that the junction is considered by many to be dangerous, due to the fact that it is difficult to judge the speed and distance of traffic especially when coming from the Mill Hill roundabout end when attempting to turn right onto the bypass as the sight line around the bend is very poor. He made the point that by allowing up to 200 more housing units with its inherent car ownership and sole access off of Knights End Road, will only compound the problems for road users and increase the likelihood of an accident at the A141 junction and at the newly created junction at the children's nursery.

Mr Male explained that the developer has included the provision of a roundabout on the A141 midway between Knights End Road and Burrowmoor Road, but only in Phase 2, following the build out of 200 dwellings and during the planning process he has repeatedly requested that the roundabout is constructed first within Phase 1 in order to allow construction traffic to access the site easily without the need to use Knights End Road and the A141 junction and it will also allow new residents to access the bypass without the need to add to the traffic along Knights End Road. He explained that access to the schools and the town away from the bypass can still be achieved from the new Knights End junction.

Mr Male added that there is a separate application with regards to the construction traffic access but, in his opinion, the solution he has set out solves that issue and provides a commitment from the developer to build the site out as outlined and actually construct a roundabout. He explained that the Gaul Road traffic lights took an age and a fight to get them constructed and in the current economic climate it is possible that Persimmon Homes could abandon the site after completing Phase 1 which would mean that all 200 dwellings would have to access their properties solely off of Knight End Road.

Mr Male added that the approval of the Broad Concept Plan during Covid restrictions is purely a concept, an idea and an outline and it does not mean anything is set in stone and he asked for the proposed A141 roundabout to be constructed before the housing works commence and that it is added as a condition of approval.

Members asked Mr Male the following questions:

- Councillor Marks stated that he also shares the same concerns, and he added that he knows the road and the fact that there is also a nursery along the road. Councillor Marks asked that when the refuse freighter is servicing the road are there any instances of bottlenecks along the section of road leading into the town. Mr Male explained that it bottlenecks in several places and in particular when children are dropped off at the nursery. He added that there are other instances on the bends of the road where cars are parked where it causes issues along with the restrictions in width in certain parts of the road and also when coming up to the A141 junction.
- Councillor Connor stated that he agrees that at the far end of the road going towards the bypass, there is no path, and you have to walk on the road. He added that he agrees with Mr Male as the road does taper in at three or four locations. Councillor Connor stated that the fact that the construction access is right beside the children's nursery, he wholeheartedly agrees that it is not the right place for construction traffic to be accessing the site.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that where the access is beside the nursery in order for groundworks to begin it will be necessary for lorries to wait by the nursery entrance to access the site. He added that there is also a bend to consider and by the nursery as you approach it from the A141 is very narrow. Councillor Imafidon stated that he echoes the concerns of Mr Male with regards to the access to the site.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Anne Dew, the applicant. Ms Dew stated that she is the Head of Planning at Persimmon Homes East Midlands and she was accompanied by Ben Purdy, Technical Director, Michelle Jeffrey, Land Director and Rob Hill, the Drainage Consultant. She stated that Persimmon Homes are very proud of the application which will deliver up to 1200 much needed zero carbon ready homes on an

allocated site, with the homes being complimented by major infrastructure improvements including land for a Primary School, a number of local highways upgrades, delivery of three new play areas and over 17 hectares of public open space.

Ms Dew explained that whilst the application is in outline form the future reserved matter submission will provide for a range of house types and sizes, many of which will help first time buyers to own their own home. She explained that within the 1200 units, 240 new homes will be provided for those in housing need and the tenure of the houses will be agreed as part of any reserved matters submission, with these homes helping the Council tackle the number of people in temporary accommodation or those waiting for accommodation and all dwellings will be zero carbon ready and highly sustainable.

Ms Dew explained that the houses will be built in accordance with the latest building regulations and will have enhanced insulation, solar panels and electric charging points. She made the point that the application is the product of over four years work and has undergone extensive consultation and collaboration with both District and County Council Officers and statutory consultees.

Ms Dew stated that the first step of the process was to prepare, in collaboration with the Council, a Broad Concept Plan (BCP) for the whole allocation and that BCP was approved in July 2021 and the current application has been designed to accord with the BCP. She added she is pleased to see that the application has been recommended for approval and a high-quality scheme has been achieved which is policy compliant and delivers on the Council's priorities.

Ms Dew stated that alongside the onsite delivery of the green infrastructure and land for both a new school and local centre, the scheme will also secure a number of highway improvements which include improvements to footpaths and public rights of way both on and off site. She added that it will also include a March Area Transport Study contribution of just over £550,000 which can be used towards either the scheme at Peas Hill roundabout or any other scheme identified in the study.

Ms Dew explained that it will also include improvements to the Gaul Road/A141 junction, improvements to the Slade End roundabout in Chatteris as well as improvements to the A141/A605 signalised junction. She made the point that alongside the highways works there is also a contribution towards the introduction of a bus service on site, together with associated on and offsite infrastructure and the contribution will be in excess of £3.1 million towards Highways and bus service provision within March.

Ms Dew added that a further £2.4 million contribution will be made towards education, local health care services, libraries and sports facilities in the district along with a contribution of just over £419,000 for off-site sport pitch improvements, currently ear marked for the 3G pitch at Estover Road. She stated that in the summary of the officer's report it states that Persimmon Homes are providing above the fair share of infrastructure for the overall allocation particularly with the costs associated with the new roundabout on the A141.

Ms Dew added that the scheme has been designed to accord with the BCP and prides itself on an attractive scheme which has been sensitively designed to respect the existing character of the local area. She explained that if the application is approved then she will look to submit a reserved matters application shortly to secure the details of the first phase of the development and as part of the process she will be seeking to discharge all outline planning conditions which would include a construction management plan.

Ms Dew concluded by stating that the development will seek to deliver up to 1200 dwellings including affordable housing, land for a new primary school and local centre, 17 hectares of public open space, three new play areas and significant highway improvements. She added that there will

also be a contribution towards local services along with a new bus route for the benefit of March and explained that during the delivery of the scheme there will also be opportunities available for local employment, apprentices and it will contribute to the local economy once the dwellings are occupied.

Ms Dew made the point that it is a positive development which, in her opinion, will benefit the local area and with the support of the committee it is hoped that the proposal will come to fruition.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Imafidon asked why consideration had not been given to the construction of the roundabout first of all and what consideration had been given with regards to the diversion of construction traffic from Knights End Road, due to the narrowness of the road in places and also the close proximity of the access point to the children's nursery. Ben Purdy, the Technical Director of Persimmon Homes, stated that the auto tracking of HGV vehicles in Knights End Road has demonstrated that the road can accommodate large vehicles. He added that whilst he has listened to the concerns of the committee, the Highway Authority have been consulted with and have stated that Knights End Road is a suitable construction route.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that Knights End Road is acceptable only by virtue of the fact that most homes along the road park their vehicles on their driveways. He added that if there are lorries, construction traffic or parents dropping off their children to the nursery whilst construction is taking place then that will be a different matter. He asked the applicant to consider why their strategy cannot be changed to make the lives of the local residents easier? Ben Purdy explained that as part of the discharge condition application which will hopefully come forward there will be the requirement to provide a construction management plan which will include routes and could also include specific timings for deliveries. He explained that it could stipulate that no deliveries take place during nursery drop off and pick up times.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that Ms Dew has explained that the reserved matters application will be submitted shortly, and she asked for the expected timescales with regards to that application submission. Ms Dew explained that if the application is approved then there will be the need to go through the Section 106 process with officers which is likely to take in the region of 6 months and then there will need to be the discharge of conditions and then the submission of the reserved matters application. She added that once the Section 106 has been signed then work will be underway in the background on the reserved matters in order for its submission. Ben Purdy explained that work is already taking place with officers with regards to Phase 1.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that with regards to Knights End Road access, in her opinion, it is totally unsuitable as it is a residential area and has a weight limit of 7.5 tonnes which is always ignored. She explained that the road suffers from speeding vehicles, and she added that in 2003 at Gaul Road a roundabout was promised by another developer, however, that never came to fruition and traffic lights were implemented instead. Councillor Mrs French made the point that she has concerns that this application will replicate that application and there will be no roundabout installed due to affordability issues.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to literature which had been sent by Persimmon which contains information concerning upgrade works to Peas Hill Roundabout, however, she is aware that those works were withdrawn at a March Area Transport Strategy (MATS) meeting last week. She asked for clarification with regards to works at the Gaul Road junction with the A141, as the works to install traffic lights cost £2.6 million pounds. She added that the literature details £25,000 towards traffic signals on the A141 junction with the A605, but, in her opinion, there is nothing wrong with the existing traffic signals and under the MATS scheme it is actually at the Hobbs Lot Bridge where works are planned. Councillor Mrs French made the point that the Public Rights of Way do need upgrading and she added that she is intrigued to read the £244,000 towards improvements to Slade End in Chatteris and she questioned what that has to do with March and why is that being incorporated in the Section 106 when that is for a totally different town. Michelle Jeffrey, the Land Director for

Persimmon Homes, explained that these are all mitigation measures which have been put forward by the County Council Highways Team and they have suggested that these are the elements that Persimmon need to pay towards.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that access is a very big concern and in the officer's report, the Highway Authority have recommended 16 conditions and one of those is the Knights End Road site access. He added that another is with regards to the Slade End roundabout prior to occupation of the 50<sup>th</sup> dwelling, as well as the delivery of the A141 Gaul Road junction improvements. He asked the representatives of Persimmon Homes whether they are able to categorically confirm that they are able to deliver the 16 detailed conditions? Ben Purdy confirmed that they are.
- Councillor Marks stated that he has major concerns regarding the application, and he has seen applications before where building construction sites have timed deliveries which never work, meaning lorries are left parked on roadsides unable to access the sites. He made the point that with 201 dwellings before the roundabout is in place, there is a likely to be 300 cars trying to access the site as well as construction traffic. Councillor Marks referred to the Considerate Construction Scheme which he understands Persimmon are members of and he expressed the view that surely it would be more considerate to put the roundabout in at Phase 1 as opposed to Phase 2 due to the impact that is likely to be caused to the rest of March, which, in his view, would be unacceptable. He referred to the affordable homes element of the application and stated that the building is being phased and he questioned when the affordable homes are being implemented. Michelle Jeffrey stated that at the current time there is significant infrastructure which is required at the beginning of the project and, therefore, they have suggested to the Council that there may be a lower number of affordable homes delivered in the first phase and then higher amounts in the subsequent phases so that 20% of affordable homes are delivered across the entire site.
- Councillor Marks asked what guarantees are in place if the number of affordable homes delivered are low to begin with and then Persimmon decide that the scheme is no longer viable and is either pulled or mothballed. He asked whether Persimmon would not feel more comfortable that the 20% of affordable homes were achieved in Phases 1 and 2? Michelle Jeffrey stated that in an ideal world then it would be nice to be able to achieve 20% in the first couple of phases but due to significant costs such as £3.1 million pounds highways costs, electricity to the site as well as a significant amount of money required for the foul pumping station which is needed. She explained that the infrastructure costs are likely to be £10 million before one home is even built. Michelle Jeffrey explained that part of the plan through the Section 106 negotiations is to work with the authority to arrive at a solution that works for everybody, and she added that the aim is to deliver 20% but it is just not possible to deliver that percentage in the first phase. Councillor Marks asked whether the delivery would be achievable in Phases 1 and 2? Michelle Jeffrey stated that at the current time the suggestion is that 10% will be delivered in the first phase and then increased percentages going forward to make sure that the 20% is delivered overall.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that he does not think that the application has been well thought out and he questioned who will be responsible for the 17 hectares of open space and the three play areas as the Council will not assume responsibility for them without any financial recompense that it would deserve. Michelle Jeffrey stated that a management company will be appointed which the residents will sign up to as soon as they take up occupation. She added that Persimmon Homes will look after the open space until it is handed over to the management company and then they will assume responsibility going forward.
- Councillor Connor stated that some members have asked for the roundabout to be delivered prior to the commencement of the construction of the dwellings. He added that whilst he appreciates all of the upfront costs and the need to have the finances in place to do it, Persimmons are a very large builder, and the application is only a small development to them in the bigger scheme of things. Councillor Connor stated that he is very unhappy about the traffic going down Knights End Road and exceptionally unhappy about the entrance being opposite Mill Hill Lane. He expressed the view that he has serious concerns when

considering the access point by the nursery and he asked whether there is going to be any reconsideration given so that the roundabout is constructed first. Michelle Jeffrey stated that they are willing to work with the Council to deliver something that works for all parties concerned, however, there does need to be some access via Knights End Road because ultimately the roundabout does need to be constructed and that cannot be done solely from the A141. She added they are willing to consider a lower number of occupations before the roundabout is required.

- Councillor Connor stated that he is grateful for agreeing to walk towards the issue because, in his opinion, there are other options such as a slip road which could be constructed off of the A141 and as long as it can accommodate a 40 tonne lorry it does not need to be up to a proper adoptable standard. He added that a compound could be constructed there and operate from there which would be closer to the proposed roundabout location and will save time and money. Councillor Connor stated that there will also be financial savings in the long run because in three years' time, the costs of construction will have increased hypothetically. Michelle Jeffrey stated that it is something to consider but it would need the approval of the Highway Authority to have a slip road off of the A141, but at the current time they are in support of the proposed access off of Knights End Road with the roundabout at a later date. Councillor Connor stated that he uses the road regularly and he can already see traffic issues at the current time.
- Councillor Benney stated that he appreciates how much work has gone into the application and made reference to the application which has been withdrawn which sets the scene, in his opinion, for how the application before the committee can progress, making the point that the construction site and the access for Phase 1 which is still in the application being determined has been withdrawn. He expressed the view that the application is now incomplete because there is no access into the site and it is clear that as applicants they acknowledge the fact that there is a need for that site but if that cannot be agreed as that application was withdrawn with a recommendation of refusal, and he questioned how as applicants can they proceed by not having the access for the construction site agreed. Michelle Jeffrey stated that the construction access which was withdrawn was for a second piece of land that Persimmon are in control of. She added that she is aware that there are concerns around the construction access point off of Knights End Road and for that reason there was some investigation works undertaken to explore the possibility of using that separate piece of land which is much closer to the A141 as an access, however, despite the number of changes that were made to it the decision was made that it would not be suitable for Highways and it was decided to withdraw the application rather than waste the time of the committee when it was already recommended for refusal. Michelle Jeffrey stated that it is a separate piece of land and does not form part of the application. Councillor Benney stated that it formed the access for the first phase of the development which is for 201 homes. Michelle Jeffrey explained that it was just going to be a secondary construction access and there was still the intention of having the main access off of Knights End Road but that was only to be for residents and the second access that was submitted was supposedly just for construction only and that would avoid lorries going up and down Knights End Road.
- Councillor Benney expressed the view that he welcomes the application as the homes are much needed, however, he does have concerns that those aspects of the application that are promised will not come forward as the committee have seen this happen on numerous times. He stated there is the need for social housing in Fenland to overcome the problem of those people living in temporary accommodation and if the 20% allocation of affordable housing can be achieved, he would be delighted, but the fact that the number of affordable homes in the early phase of the development is lower and then there is some uncertainty whether the remaining affordable homes will be delivered concerns him greatly that the 20% will not be achieved. Councillor Benney made the point that if he was in the developers position, he would do everything possible to maximise their profits but as councillors there is the need for the homes to be delivered and he would like assurances that the social housing can be delivered.
- Councillor Benney stated that he is delighted to hear about the financial contribution to the

Slade End roundabout, which he welcomes, and he made the point that Persimmon have delivered a very nice development in Chatteris. Michelle Jeffrey stated that they have every intention of delivering 20% affordable housing across the scheme and whilst Persimmon are a large developer and have resources, they can only be used towards certain amounts of items and at the moment the majority of the highway improvements are requested within the first phase. She added that the roundabout is going to be delivered within the first phase as well as all the highways' contributions, Section 106 contributions, pitch contributions as well as 20% affordable homes and all of this is not achievable at once, hence the request for some flexibility. Michelle Jeffrey made the point that if members preference is for affordable housing and if the committee are willing to recommend some triggers for the other things to be later in the development then that is something that can be looked at, however, at the current time, work is being undertaken on the triggers that have been recommended by the Highway Authority.

- Councillor Benney asked whether Persimmon have engaged with a housing provider yet for the scheme? Michelle Jeffrey explained that at the current time there is no housing provider in place, however, there is a housing provider who has expressed a significant interest and are interested in taking on all the affordable housing for the whole scheme. Councillor Benney asked whether that would be for the 20% of affordable housing that is in the proposal and Michelle Jeffrey confirmed that is correct.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that Persimmon Homes is listed within the Financial Times as a recognised developer who deliver good quality homes throughout the whole country. He added that the development is a multi-hundred-million-pound project and whilst the money is not up front, the access appears to be a very big stumbling block and he would suggest that further work is undertaken with highways to revisit the access. Councillor Gerstner asked for clarity as to whether the site is having electrical charging points and solar panels for every dwelling? Ben Purdy stated that as part of building regulation requirements all plots will have EV charging points installed and PV panels on the roofs. He added that the development will potentially have to be to the Government's future homes standard requirements and at the moment it is anticipated that air source heat pumps will be installed, and the homes will be carbon ready homes and ready for the Net Zero initiative. Ben Purdy explained that Persimmon have currently undergone a transition initiative for 31% carbon reduction future home standard which the application before the committee will potentially sit into a 70% to 80% carbon reduction.
- Councillor Sennitt -Clough stated that with regards to the Slade End roundabout it mentions that this should be delivered prior to the delivery of the 50<sup>th</sup> dwelling, however, prior to the delivery of the 201 dwelling the roundabout at the end of Knights End Road and she asked whether that had been negotiated with highways or was their suggestion. Michelle Jeffrey stated that Highways suggested those triggers and at the moment within the Planning Officer's report there is a list of highway improvements shown which are required to deliver but are only highways recommendation for those triggers and are still to be finally agreed. She explained that there is a willingness to work with the Council and members to deliver the triggers that are suitable for everybody. Councillor Sennitt Clough expressed the view that the priorities are wrong as listed at 43 it refers to the Slade End roundabout and is listed above the A141 roundabout which she feels is a priority.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that, with regards to the 20% affordable housing and for the site to be a blended site, has there been any requirements given to state that it needs to be delivered equally throughout the four phases. Michelle Jeffrey stated that at the current time that is still up for discussion, but she has worked with authorities in the past where there has been the requirement for 40% affordable housing and there has still been the chance to blend them without siting all of the affordable homes in one location.
- Councillor Marks referred to EV charging and stated that there will be 1200 homes who each have a charging point, and questioned whether this has been looked at in detail as he understands from a fellow elected Member that there has already been an electric problem. He expressed the view that 1200 chargers on one site appears to be an awful lot of electric that is being utilised in the area. Ben Purdy explained that the way that the scheme is

designed is not a problem and the power for the site has already been secured for 1200 dwellings, a school and local centre. He added that the EV chargers are 7.2kw chargers which connect into the consumer unit in each block, and it is designed so that most of the chargers will be used at night on an EV tariff and the capacity is there for the site. Councillor Marks asked whether the capacity is there all the time or just at night? Ben Purdy explained that the capacity is available all of the time.

- Councillor Connor stated that a roundabout near the application site is more important, in his view, than one in Chatteris at the current time as that is something that could be considered in the future. He added that by not implementing the roundabout at Slade End, it will save money as well as the proposed signalling works which are not required at the A605 junction according to Councillor Mrs French, which will bring forward the opportunity to save some money. Councillor Connor expressed the view it is absolutely imperative that some of the money that can be saved from the highways contributions be used to build the roundabout near the application site first. He stated that this is his request and whilst he understands that nothing has been signed to date, he made the point that he will not be happy unless something is agreed at the meeting. Councillor Connor stated that the houses are much needed and as the whole site is going to take 13 or so years to build out in its entirety, he would like consideration given to only fencing off the land, which is actually required at any given time, so that people can still use the land for dog walking. Ben Purdy stated that, in relation to the trigger for the roundabout as well as Slade End, it is something that could be revisited subject to working with the Highway Authority. He added that with regards to the point concerning the fencing off of land, Persimmon will only purchase the first phase and only fence off what is needed in order to build, and the rest of the land will still be agricultural field as and when required when reserved matters come forward and, therefore, dog walking routes will still be accessible out of the construction zone.
- Councillor Marks stated that he would like clarification that the applicant is only buying the first phase as they proceed, and he would like to know what guarantees they can provide to the committee that they are able to purchase the subsequent land for the following phases in order to achieve the affordable homes. Michelle Jeffrey stated that Persimmon have a contractual position on the whole site, but the land is only drawn down in parcels as and when the relevant planning permission is achieved. She added that the whole site will not be fenced off on day 1 and the whole field will not be purchased from the landowner on day 1 but the contractual position gives Persimmon the ability to buy every phase of the site. Councillor Marks asked for clarification with regards to where the roundabout sits in the phasing? Ben Purdy referred to the presentation screen and highlighted that phase 1 is shown in the green line and links to the roundabout and that is all shown within phase 1. Councillor Marks questioned whether the land that is needed for the roundabout is within phase 1? Ben Purdy confirmed that is the case. Councillor Marks questioned that if one of the shareholders comes forward and questions the viability then there will be 200 homes built with no roundabout and all vehicles will be using Knights End Road. He added that members need some sort of guarantee that all is in order. Michelle Jeffrey explained that is why Persimmon have suggested that the trigger is brought forward. Councillor Marks questioned whether that would mean that the trigger is as the first house is being built to commence works on the roundabout? Michelle Jeffrey explained that they would prefer to see some level of housing built before the roundabout is put in because it obviously needs to be paid for and if some houses are sold before the roundabout is constructed that is better. She explained that the preference is to build the roundabout from the site but if the only way that the committee are minded to granting planning permission is that it has to be done on first occupation, then that is something that they are willing to accept.
- Councillor Marks stated that Persimmon are stating first occupation, and members are saying start of build, and he asked whether it would be possible at the start of build to commence the roundabout? Michelle Jeffrey explained that it would be finalised prior to the first occupation. Councillor Marks stated that he would like further clarification as he would like to see the roundabout works commenced on the first day of development as opposed to occupation of homes. Michelle Jeffrey explained that she is not sure how that can be secured by a Section



106 or condition as usually it is linked to occupations, and she is not aware of any other mechanism that could be used. She made the point that it is not in their interest to occupy any homes until after the roundabout is in because ultimately they make money from selling houses and not from building them.

- Councillor Connor made the point that the construction traffic does not want to go down Knights End Road and he cannot see any reason why that course of action cannot be taken.
- The Legal Officer stated that the committee should not be used as a bartering session and no matter what the applicant offers, a condition cannot be imposed or a Section 106 obligation required unless it is necessary in planning terms. He added that in order to judge whether that was necessary then advice would need to be sought from Highways Officers. The Legal Officer advised that whatever the committee wish to impose today, there needs to be satisfaction that there is a genuine highways reason, and that timing is necessary and not what is desirable in planning terms.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that there is an absolute certain need for that to happen.
- Councillor Benney stated that as a Council certain things cannot demand from applications and whilst members can ask for them at committee, they are often told that they cannot have them. He made the point that developers need to be treated as partners because Fenland needs homes, adding that social housing is required and if the Council does not work with developers then the partnership will break down and the Council's objectives fail. Councillor Benney made the point that the homes need to come forward and he understand the concerns over the access and whilst it would be nice to see the roundabout in place, he fails to see how the committee can insist that it is implemented at commencement of build. He added that officers need to be asked whether this is achievable because from a Council's perspective there is the need to know whether it is a reasonable ask and is it correct to be asking for something which is possibly not achievable. Councillor Benney expressed the view that the committee need to be reasonable in what they are asking for because if not they will end up with nothing.
- Ben Purdy stated that in terms of construction traffic, there is the Construction Management Plan which needs to be approved as part of discharge and they can agree within that no construction traffic will enter onto Knights End Road and there will need to be a secondary access constructed which could be on the location of the roundabout, such as a deacceleration and acceleration lane in that location which can agreed potentially as a condition. He stated that is not a bartering exercise as the construction is off the A141.
- Councillor Connor asked Ben Purdy to clarify that what he is suggesting is a de acceleration lane off the A141 into the application site and not to use any heavy goods vehicles or construction traffic associated with the development. Ben Purdy stated that will be subject to Highways input and agreement.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that in the report it says the roundabout will be constructed prior to the occupation of the two hundred and first dwelling, however, during the discussion earlier it was mentioned that it would be on the completion and occupation of the first house, and he asked for clarification. Michelle Jeffrey explained at the moment the highway recommendation is the 201 but if it is an absolute requirement than consideration can be given to delivering the roundabout prior to the fist occupation.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French explained that she is a member of the County Council Highways Committee and the Chairman of the March Area Transport Study (MATS) and after receiving the literature from Persimmon Homes yesterday and after attending a MATS meeting last week, she is now somewhat confused. She referred to the upgrade of Peas Hill Roundabout, and she explained that there have a number of applications over the last two or three-months including Barkers Lane and The Avenue and everyone of them has requested improvements to bus services. Councillor Mrs French asked the Highways Officer whether they are aware that the upgrade to Peas Hill Roundabout has been pulled? Andrew Connolly from Cambridgeshire County Council Highways stated that he is aware that there have been

difficulties over a number of months, discussions with the applicant have taken place over many months and years and, therefore, this was agreed a long time ago before last week when Peas Hill was officially pulled.

- Councillor Mrs French referred to the junction of the A141 and Gaul Road and asked Highways Officers to confirm what is proposed there to equate to £804,000? Andrew Connolly explained that the works are to make improvements to the signalised junction and all the highway requirements are evidenced based and the capacity requirements show that improvements are required when considering the amount of development proposed. Councillor Mrs French explained that she is somewhat confused as she is aware that Cannon Kirk spent £2.6 million improving the junction which was originally going to be a roundabout in 2003, and it took nearly 20 years to get the traffic lights. She added that she does not understand why the £804,869 is being requested as there are other schemes in March that could benefit from the money.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to the junction of the A141 and the A605 and she asked officers to provide details of the proposed plans for the junction. Hannah Seymour-Shove of Cambridgeshire County Council Highways explained that the proposed works at the junction are to install a signal MOVA scheme which controls traffic light signals at isolated junctions. She explained that discussions have taken place with the signals team, and they are satisfied that such works will mitigate the development impacts at the junction.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that as part of the MATS there is a plan for the junction of the A141 and Hobbs Lot and she asked the Highways Officer whether this was something that they were aware of? Hannah Seymour-Shove stated that they are aware of that, and it was considered within the mitigation request for that junction. Councillor Mrs French questioned why there is a request for £244,796 towards improvements in Chatteris to the roundabout? Andrew Connolly stated that the modelling demonstrates that over 100 vehicles are going to head down towards the Slade End roundabout in Chatteris and it is already a very congested roundabout and adding over 100 vehicles will make it even worse which is why the development needs to mitigate its impact on the roundabout. Councillor Mrs French made the point that she is not convinced with that fact, and she added that she recently attended a meeting at County Council where she requested works to be undertaken at the Eastwood End junction. She expressed the view that she has no problems with Chatteris, but she does object when March has severe traffic issues and money is being diverted to Chatteris. Councillor Mrs French explained that she will agree to all of the other highway improvements, but she will not agree to the March Area Transport money being moved to Chatteris. Andrew Connolly stated that there is a lot of mitigation being secured for the MAT schemes but when a development is showing impacts on other junctions that do not form part of the MAT scheme, the impact still needs to be dealt with and that is what is happening at the Slade End roundabout. Councillor Mrs French added that the junction of Eastwood End and the A141 has to be looked at as well.
- Councillor Benney stated that he has heard Highways Officers refer to mapping and he has great faith in the mapping system. He added that because the development is proposed to be in March, officers have considered that traffic is going to come from March to Chatteris and add even more congestion to an already congested roundabout, with the additional house building needs the improvement works carried out further down the line so as to not cause more problems in Chatteris. Councillor Benney asked the Highways Officers whether they are confident with the mapping which proves that this will alleviate some of the problems in Chatteris as he would not want to see March get 1200 homes to congest Chatteris even further. Andrew Connolly stated that it is traffic modelling that is undertaken and that considers what traffic is there at the moment and then they add their traffic on top. He explained that they are required to mitigate their impact and, therefore, not to necessarily fix the whole of the Slade End roundabout but to make sure that their development does not make it any worse which is what the applicant is demonstrating that they are doing.
- Councillor Marks made the point that he is not a fan of mapping as he is of the opinion that they are desk top surveys and are unworkable before they have been reviewed. He stated that Knights End Road has been given a measurement of 4.46 metres wide and he asked

whether officers have a measurement of the width of the narrow part of that road? Andrew Connolly stated that the applicant would have undertaken any necessary surveys. Councillor Marks asked whether the Highways Officers have undertaken any survey associated with the development such as vehicle movements? Andrew Connolly confirmed he does not have any details concerning the width of the road. Councillor Marks referred to a plan and stated that the road shows that it is 4.46 metres wide at a narrow point. David Rowen explained that the measurements included on that plan are actually topographical references and, therefore, it is actually the land level ordnance data rather than the widths. Councillor Marks stated that he had hoped that had the Highways Officers undertaken a desk top survey that they would have given the widths. He expressed the opinion there would most definitely be problems for two lorries to be able to pass along the road at the narrowest point as they come out of the site and there will definitely be problems as a result of construction traffic such as bulldozers and extra wide loads.

- Andrew Connolly stated that it has not been offered to the Highway Authority to deliver a roundabout off of the A141 from the start.
- Councillor Marks stated that he is referring to Knights End Road as it currently stands with construction traffic or other traffic. James Stringer stated that as part of the application Highways Officers would have looked at the width of Knights End Road and its ability to accommodate HGV traffic. He added that the trigger point is slightly irrelevant in that due to the fact that if it is considered to be not wide enough then it does not matter. James Stringer explained that the highways assessment is can it accommodate HGV traffic and whilst there may be an issue with regards how long that happens, as a point of principle it can geometrically accommodate HGV traffic.
- Councillor Marks asked for clarification and asked whether a desk top survey has been undertaken? James Stringer stated that highways do have a study from the applicant that covers what Knights End Road looks like in terms of its existing widths and highways have used that information in conjunction with their own mapping which is used to look at the width of carriageways and whether it can accommodate the known widths of HGVs and other construction traffic.
- Councillor Marks asked whether this work has been undertaken by the County Council Highways Officers with information away from the developer? James Stringer stated that the Highways Officers have their own mapping system and have information on the highways network that they are responsible for and are, therefore, aware of the makeup of the carriageways. He explained that as part of any application highways review the information that they hold.
- Councillor Connor stated that the applicants have stated that consideration could be given to the implementation of a slip road off of the A141 bypass into the application site and he asked whether that would be agreeable to the Highway Authority? James Stringer stated that as a point of principle he does not have any issue with that, however, whether it is physically deliverable within land that Persimmon have access to in conjunction with the red line boundary that is on the plan and whether it can meet the required standards of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges would still need to be looked at. He added that Persimmon would need to go away and undertake an assessment but in principle if it is achievable and meets the tests then it would be something that Highways can review.
- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that the roundabout is essential as there has been recent accidents there as well as taking into consideration that the crematorium is in the vicinity on the opposite side of the bypass. She stated that if the application is going to be approved then it must be subject to highways. Andrew Connolly stated that the applicant has not offered the roundabout to them from day one but if that was proposed then highways would not have an issue with the roundabout being delivered from day one. He added that at the moment the assessment has been based on modelling works on the junction of the A141 and Knights End Road which can accommodate in the region of 200 vehicles which is reflected in the condition and if the applicant wishes to offer something else then that can be considered.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that originally the roundabout was going to be delivered on the

occupation of the 201st house, but Persimmon have stated that they are prepared to build the roundabout on the first occupation and he asked whether the Highway Authority would object to that proposal? Andrew Connolly stated that Highways would have no objection to that.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that with regards to the engineering of the slip road would that be considered as an issue. James Stringer stated that he is not able to comment on that new proposal currently as neither the County Council nor Persimmon have looked at that yet. He explained it would need to be looked at to see whether geometrically it can be accommodated or whether Persimmon own enough land along the frontage of the A141 to fit it in but as a point of principle if those things can be overcome then it could be looked at. James Stringer stated that they are quite big risks because if they cannot fit those aspects in then it is not achievable.
- Councillor Connor asked the Highway Officers to confirm that they would be content for Persimmons to construct the roundabout before the ground is broken on the application site. James Stringer stated that he would not have an issue with that, however, Persimmon have stated that they would need to access their site to be able to construct their roundabout and if the slip road option is not available then there is no other way for the applicant to get onto their land other than via Knights End Road. He added that if the slip road is not an option then they will have to come in via Knights End Road and if the first thing that they do on site is then to build a roundabout.
- Councillor Connor stated that he would be willing to accept that because it would only be for a limited amount of traffic using Knights End Road to build the roundabout as opposed to an increased amount of traffic which would be using the site for the construction of 201 homes. James Stringer stated that he agrees that it would be a very limited time and would be much smaller than the 201 homes. Councillor Connor expressed the view that it would be a compromise for him, and he would find that acceptable.
- Councillor Marks asked the Highways Officers whether they are aware of the roundabout suggestion by the developer and has there been communication regarding as it. He added that earlier in the discussion, one of the officers had stated that they were not aware of it. Andrew Connolly asked whether Councillor Marks was referring to the new roundabout on the A141 and Councillor Marks confirmed that was correct. Andrew Connolly stated that they have had considerable dialogue with the applicant regarding this and have the full designs which meet the safety standards and have been through a safety audit. He added that he was referring earlier with regards to triggers of when delivery should take place over communications with the applicant.
- Councillor Marks asked for confirmation that Highways are happy with layout of the roundabout, and it is acceptable to them with everything being achievable. Andrew Connolly stated that it has been through a safety audit and any issues raised as part of the safety audit have been addressed.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that with regards to the bus service provision and the delivery of public transport between the application site and March Town Centre that there are no bus stops in Knights End Road. She expressed the view that as it is a lengthy road that needs to be looked at.
- Councillor Mrs French added that the local Vicar of St Wendredas Church has submitted concerns with regards to the Public Rights of Way and the closed cemetery which has been closed since 1880. She added that the Vicar has requested that proper fencing is erected to deny people accessing the cemetery irresponsibly.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she has noted that Highways have stated that improvements are given to the A141 under the MATs scheme but there is no mention in the Highways report, making the point that the Hostmoor junction is very controversial with certain matters. Councillor Mrs French stated that she would like to know whether Highways are looking into the junction of Hostmoor Avenue and the A141? Andrew Connolly stated that there are number of schemes and developments impacting onto that junction. James Stringer added that the Highway Authority and colleagues in the Rights of Way team have asked for a condition for a detailed rights of way scheme and consideration will be given with regard to the fencing and the churchyard can be dealt with.

- Andrew Connolly stated that with regards to bus stops, Highways have requested a financial contribution towards improving bus services which is the FACT service operated by the Combined Authority and the proposal is for the service to run through the site once Knights End Road and the A141 are linked up. Councillor Mrs French stated that she would like to see a larger bus as the vehicles used by FACT are not very large and she would like to see bus stops or shelters in Knights End Road. Andrew Connolly stated that with the regards to the routing of the bus, the current proposal is that it is likely to go through the site and not necessarily down the whole length of Knights End Road, however, there could be the potential for a bus stop closer to the Knights End Road section which would be more convenient for existing residents.
- David Rowen referred to the rights of way comment and fencing which was referred to and he added that this was referred to in the update report and provided details of the suggestion that there could be additions to the wording in the planning conditions.
- Councillor Marks asked where the 7.5 tonne restriction zone actually starts on Knights End Road. James Stringer explained that it is his understanding that it covers the whole length of the road from the A141 up to the Church.
- Councillor Mrs French asked Rob Morris from Anglian Water whether he is satisfied that the development can cope with sewage? Rob Morris explained that there has been a number of investigations, studies and modelling work which have taken place as there have been discussions with the applicant for many years concerning the proposal. He added that as part of the discussions there is a Section 98 which is a requisition of a sewer which would be looking for a pumping station to serve the site with the rising main to take it to the sustainable point of connection in March. Rob Morris added that Anglian Water are satisfied that the flows can be accommodated.
- Councillor Connor referred to a previous meeting where a representative from Anglian Water had stated that they were not going to allow an application to discharge any more effluent into the Barkers Lane sewer and the application contained a condition where a pipe system was going to be implemented down The Avenue and she had stated that the pumping station in Knights End Road would not be able to cope. Councillor Connor asked Rob Morris if he could confirm that with the current proposal the effluent from the first 50 of the dwellings is going to be using the same pumping station as detailed within the officer's report? Rob Morris stated that the first 50 dwellings which have been looked at are going to Knights End Road and then Knights End pumping station and the flows can be accommodated with that length of sewer and the pumping station. Councillor Connor stated that Hannah Wilson from Anglian Water had advised members that the pumping station was up to capacity and the sewerage backs up onto Barkers Lane and he questioned the fact that the pumping station cannot cope in wet weather periods without the addition of a further 50 properties. Rob Morris explained that the flows are going into a different part of the network, and he explained that the issue with Barkers Lane is that it is a very flat sewer which causes capacity issues. He added that the sewer in Knights End Road has the self-cleansing velocity gradient which allows for the flow to go in there and he added that the flow for 50 properties will be around 0.2 litres per second and the capacity of the 150 sewer that is being looked to connect into it has up to 26.4 litres per second and the flow going into it is a negligible amount. Rob Morris made the point that he understands the point made with regards to the accumulation of lots of sewers but there is sufficient latency period for any flows coming into it in order that it can be managed.

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

- Councillor Benney expressed the view that he hopes that the improvements do take place to the Apple Green roundabout as the proposed dwellings will have an impact on the residents of Chatteris and Chatteris deserves it.
- Councillor Connor stated that he can see why the 1200 homes should be approved but he added that he feels very strongly that the roundabout should be built prior to any development taking place of the homes. He added that as a compromise he would like the committee to concur with him that the construction traffic should only be allowed to access Knights End Road in order to build the roundabout.

- Councillor Mrs French stated that as part of the BCP it had been discussed previously that the top of Knights End Road be closed so that nothing goes through there and that maybe something to consider.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that the applicant appears to have made some compromise with regards to building the roundabout on the first occupation and not the 201st dwelling and, in his view, the applicant is making a huge effort if the roundabout could not be built from the very beginning.
- Councillor Benney made the point that he agrees with the point made by Councillor Connor and added that it would be good for the residents of March and Knights End Road if the roundabout could be built so that they do not have to wait and to keep the construction traffic to a minimum.
- Councillor Marks stated that he would like the developers to reflect and take into account the disruption that is likely for such a large number of years. He added that if the application considers the neighbours by constructing the roundabout from day 1 then the local residents will feel happier that at least the developer has tried to work with the Council and consider the local residents. Councillor Marks stated that he agrees with the point made by Councillor Benney that the contribution towards the works at the Chatteris roundabout is also needed.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough stated that whilst she agrees that the construction traffic should be kept to a minimum, she would like to know how that particular condition can be imposed and policed going forward.
- David Rowen stated that there has been a great deal of discussion surrounding the roundabout and referred to the point made by Councillor Benney concerning reasonableness and added that with regards to dealing ordinarily with developments of this scale, it is not uncommon for there to be a delivery of a certain level of that development before infrastructure is delivered. He explained that with regards to the information before the committee, the modelling work indicates that the first 200 houses can be accommodated by Knights End Road before the roundabout needs to be delivered and also the professional view of the Highway Officers is that there the construction traffic for that first phase of development can also be accommodated by Knights End Road. David Rowen added that, whilst the applicant has indicated to the committee that there maybe some scope to move that to a lower level of delivery from the 200 homes, in terms of reasonableness and the evidence for decision making everything indicates that a certain level of delivery can occur before the roundabout is needed. He explained that officers can undertake discussions with the applicant to decide exactly where that threshold is, however, in his experience it would be very unusual for infrastructure as significant as a roundabout to be delivered before development commences and it would be very unusual for a roundabout to be delivered before first occupation. David Rowen stated that, whilst he appreciates the concerns around the safety of Knights End Road, there is nothing to substantiate and evidence that with the only evidence and professional opinions in front of the committee from Highways Officers is that there is no justification to be seeking the roundabout pre-commencement.
- Councillor Marks stated that having spoken to Highways it appears that the emphasis appears to have been put on the developer to provide the data for the roundabout and not the Highways Officers who have admitted that they have not undertaken a desk top survey. He added that he still has serious concerns as a regular user of the road, and he does not feel that the plans are particularly safe, and the residents need to be considered along with the children who use the nursery.
- David Rowen added that the committee need to make their decisions based on the evidence before them and not to make decisions based on emotion or the human side of things and there is no evidence which has been provided to justify requiring the roundabout to be delivered at an earlier stage. He explained that the usual way of approaching a scheme such as this is that the developers provide facts and figures which is then verified by the Highway Authority and the application has been through a significant round of modelling and remodelling work in some instances. David Rowen made the point that the views of the Highways Officers in front of members are a result of a three-year long process and numerous iterations of modelling work, and their views are set out in the officer report. He

explained that the mitigation required by Highways is also set out in the officer report and that should be the basis on which the committee makes their decision.

- Councillor Marks expressed the view that he has seen a lot more in-depth reports from the County Council than what has been provided with this application. He added that, whilst he appreciates that emotion needs to be discounted, he is concerned that the information from Highways is not as sufficient as to what he has seen on other applications.
- The Legal Officer stated that there does not appear to be any supporting evidence in order for the committee to impose a condition or Section 106 obligation to require that the roundabout is constructed and advised the committee that they may find themselves with a challengeable planning permission. He explained that if the applicants are not happy with the condition, then they can appeal, and such an appeal is likely to be lost due to the fact that there is no actual evidence other than emotion. The Legal Officer highlighted to members that if the application were to go to appeal then the Council may find themselves liable to costs and he explained to members that as the applicant has alluded to the fact that they would consider such a condition.
- Councillor Marks stated that before a proposal is made then members need to consider the conditions that they would like to see added to the application.
- Gavin Taylor drew members attention to proposed condition 45 in the officer's report which sets out explicitly when the roundabout is proposed or required to be secured and following the discussion by members it would appear to be the crux of what members are considering and may, therefore, wish to amend that in their proposal. Gavin Taylor referred members to the legal advice provided to members by the Legal Officer and added that there has not been an explicit agreement from the applicant to demonstrate that they would accept a variance to that condition only an indication that they may consider a variance to it and, therefore, that does carry a risk because if the condition is amended then the applicant could technically appeal that condition.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she agrees with the comments made by Gavin Taylor concerning condition 45 and referred to condition 46 where she added that she is very concerned after Cannon Kirk spent £2.6 million at the Gaul Road junction, only to hear that the County Council are still requesting money for that junction. She referred to condition 47 which stated that no more than 500 dwellings shall be occupied until such a time as the MATS Hostmoor Avenue scheme or any alternative junction improvement scheme for the A141/Hostmoor Avenue junction has been delivered. Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that the reserved matters application is not likely to be received until 2025/26 and by the time development starts, she is hopeful that under the MATS scheme that the Hostmoor scheme will already have been delivered. She made the point that she is not happy with the application, but it cannot be refused and when the reserved matters application is submitted at that time it will be necessary to review the conditions.
- David Rowen stated that in terms of Gaul Road, Cannon Kirk have delivered the junction improvements, however, the design and engineering of the junction is to basically deal with the traffic which was generated as result of the Cannon Kirk scheme and as a result of the current proposal there will be additional traffic flows and potentially different traffic flows which is why Highways have identified mitigation measures meaning that the junction requires an element of re-engineering to accommodate the development. He added with regards to the modelling, the impact will not occur until the 500<sup>th</sup> dwelling and he explained that with regards to the MATS scheme the impact is after a certain number of dwellings which is why 500 is the trigger point as it is not needed before then.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that by the time the reserved matters application is submitted she would hope that Hostmoor and the rest of the MATS scheme will be completed. She added that a lot of the funding comes from the Combined Authority and, in her opinion, it will be interesting to see where all the funding is diverted to if the MATS scheme is completed.
- David Rowen referred to the wording of condition 47 and explained that it does seem to indicate that if the MATS scheme has delivered the Hostmoor improvements then potentially that money is not required for that particular scheme.
- David Rowen stated that officers are seeking delegated authority from the committee to

finalise the terms of the Section 106 Agreement, to finalise the precise wording of the condition list which will include the condition that the Chairman has set out.

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she is looking at the list of commercial opening times at condition 53 which refers to a commercial unit and she asked what is the commercial unit going to be operating as between 6am and 11pm. Gavin Taylor explained that is in reference to the local centre and, therefore, the intention is to have a small retail outlet such as a convenience store or hairdressers and, therefore, the proposal is to restrict the opening hours but that is generally to serve the local community.
- Councillor Marks stated that he would like to review the construction plan alongside the Chairman and Planning Officers. David Rowen asked whether that is to review the wording or details of the condition? Councillor Marks stated that he would like to see both aspects.

**Proposed by Councillor Connor, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be APPROVED as per the officer's recommendation subject to amendment to the conditions that the roundabout is complete before any building commences with a caveat that the construction traffic should be allowed to enter and leave Knights End Road unfettered during the construction of the roundabout.**

*(Councillors Connor, Mrs French and Marks declared, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they had been lobbied on the application)*

*(Councillor Mrs French further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that she is a member of March Town Council but takes no part in Planning. She added that she is also the Chairman of the MATS scheme)*

3.35 pm

Chairman