



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held at 1:00pm on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 in the Council Chamber at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE.

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith  
Cllr David Brown  
Cllr Matthew Downey  
Cllr Lavinia Edwards  
Cllr Lis Every  
Cllr Bill Hunt (Chairman)  
Cllr Alec Jones  
Cllr Lisa Stubbs (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr John Trapp  
Cllr Gareth Wilson

### **OFFICERS**

Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager  
Holly Chapman – Planning Officer  
Caroline Evans – Democratic Services Officer  
Toni Hylton – Senior Planning Officer  
Jade Ling – Communications Officer  
Sarah Parisi – Senior Support Officer  
Andrew Phillips – Planning Team Leader  
Isabella Taylor – Planning Officer  
Russell Wignall – Legal Assistant

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Andrew Fleet (Applicant's Agent, Agenda Items 5 & 6 / Minutes  
69 & 70)  
Parish Cllr Liz Houghton (Agenda Items 5 & 6 / Minutes 69 & 70)  
Parish Cllr Jilly Rogers (Agenda Items 5 & 6 / Minutes 69 & 70)  
  
1 member of the public

## **64. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Austen.

## **65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Downey declared an interest in agenda item 7 (21/01487/ADI, multiple sites across Ely) due to being a member of City of Ely Council which had been involved with the application.

Cllr Every was also a member of City of Ely Council and declared herself to be predetermined on agenda item 7 (21/01487/ADI, multiple sites across Ely). She would therefore leave the meeting after speaking as the Ward Member, and before the debate and vote.

## **66. MINUTES**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021. There were no comments from Members.

As a procedural reminder, the Chairman read aloud part of Procedure Rule 14 from the Council's Constitution: "No discussion will take place upon the Minutes of Council, its Committees and other Member bodies, except upon their accuracy, and any questions of their accuracy shall be raised by motion."

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

## **67. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Agenda item 7 (21/01487/ADI) would be considered first, out of order, to allow additional time for an objector to agenda item 5 (21/01092/FUL) to arrive. This was an exceptional circumstance since Council IT issues had meant that receipt of the speaker's request, and subsequent confirmation of their successful registration, had only occurred that morning despite having been sent before the speaker registration deadline.
- It had been agreed at the last meeting that the minibus for formal site visits would re-commence as soon as practical. Given the increase in COVID-19 cases there would be no minibus for the February or March meetings and there would be further review in March for the April meeting.
- Agenda items 5 and 6 would be considered separately.

## **68. 21/01487/ADI – MULTIPLE SITES ACROSS ELY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Holly Chapman, Planning Officer, presented a report (W129, previously circulated) recommending approval of an application seeking permission for the installation of three digital advertisements, with interactive touch screens, in multiple locations throughout Ely. These advertisements represented the second phase of the project, with 12 advertisements having been previously approved by the Committee in December 2021. The application had been brought to the Committee for decision, in line with the Council's Constitution, because ECDC was the applicant.

Members were shown aerial images, site photographs, and maps indicating the three application sites (a fourth site in Barton Square had been removed from the application, as detailed in the report) together with diagrams of the two sign styles (a 2.35m tall single-sided totem and a wall-mounted screen). The advertisements were intended for tourism and wayfinding, and illustrative screen images were shown as examples of what could be included on the digital screens. In Forehill Car Park the advertisement would replace the existing tourism information point. In St Mary's Street the advertisement would be positioned in the bus stop and the existing tourism information point on St Mary's Green would be removed. The third advertisement would be wall-mounted on the side of 72 Market Street, opposite the entrance to Ely Museum.

Since the application concerned advertising, there were only limited considerations:

- **Principle of development** – the display of advertisements is subject to a separate consent process within the planning system and are controlled with reference to their effects on amenity and public safety only. The subterranean works required for the proposed totems were considered to be part of the advertisement and therefore assessed in the same manner.
- **Amenity (visual and aural)** – all three sites had been assessed for their heritage and townscape sensitivity. Where less than substantial harm was found to the Conservation Area, its setting and significance, and the setting of nearby heritage assets, that harm was weighed against the social and economic public benefit to the city by providing a cohesive tourist and wayfinding information network. In all three locations it was considered that there would be no detrimental residential amenity impacts.
- **Public safety** – the proposals would not obstruct any CCTV cameras or cause glare upon them. The Local Highways Authority had not raised any objections. The Access Group had raised an objection related to the use of the advertisements by wheelchair users. A similar objection had not been raised in relation to the previously-approved Phase 1 of the project and the applicant would be advised of the comments should the application be approved.
- **Other matters** – a luminance condition would be imposed to restrict the luminance of the advertisements to no more than 600cd/m<sup>2</sup> during night-time hours (16:00-08:00 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 18:30-07:00 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September) to accord with Local Highway Authority and Environmental Health guidance, and in the interests of visual amenity. The same condition had been applied to Phase 1.

In summary, three illuminated advertisements were proposed. The harm had been weighed against the public benefits in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF and it was considered that the proposal complied with the Design Guide, the Ely Conservation Area Appraisal, the NPPF, and policies ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV11 and ENV12 of the Local Plan 2015. The application was therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Chairman invited Cllr Lis Every, Ward Member for Ely East, to address the Committee and she read aloud a pre-prepared statement.

*“Thank you Chair for allowing me to speak to support this application.*

*Members will be aware that at the last Planning Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December an application 21/01280/ADI for the first part of the programme of digital signage across the City was agreed. This application is for the second half of this programme for 3 further sites. A 4<sup>th</sup> site was removed which I was very pleased about. I would like to reiterate my previous support for these signs in support of this application.*

*Tourism and local visitors to Ely are vital to maintaining and increasing economic growth within our City. We have been more fortunate than some other cities and towns as we have continued to attract visitors post pandemic. Signage, or the lack of it, has been a discussion which has been ongoing for many years. Signage particularly from the station into the town and along Waterside has been poor. In addition, the City has been unable to use local*

*media communications to offset that, e.g. apps, without the necessary wi-fi which we now have to maximise publication of our heritage sites, events and local shopping areas. The successful bid to the Ely Market Town fund at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has enabled the City to work on providing appropriate and informative signage to be achieved. Much collaborative work with stakeholders, including the Access Group, has been done to identify the best sites in keeping with our conservation area. I would again like to thank the Officers in Economic Development and Planning (particularly the Conservation Officer) for helping bring about a plan including this latest application which will enhance information for visitors and encourage them to stay longer and visit all our heritage sites and open spaces, and shop in our markets, hostelrys and local independent shops. We are very keen to get these installed and populated as we enter the Platinum Jubilee Year which will help maximise enjoyment of our City and increase footfall and spend.”*

Cllr Ambrose Smith questioned the purpose of dimming the advertisements from 4pm for half of the year since their purpose was to assist those who were unfamiliar with the City. Cllr Every mentioned the importance of the Conservation Area and the Planning Officer explained that the condition specified 600cd/m<sup>2</sup> as the maximum permitted illumination during night-time hours but the advertisements would not be unreadable; the purpose was to control the glare and prevent excessive illumination. She confirmed to Cllr Hunt that, if the application was approved and the applicant subsequently considered a condition to be unsuitable, then the applicant could apply to alter the condition(s) and such an application would be considered in the usual manner. Cllr Trapp suggested that the signs could automatically dim depending upon the light levels and the Planning Officer reiterated that the condition was designed to ensure that there was a control to determine the maximum brightness.

Cllr Trapp asked Cllr Every whether the District Council or the City of Ely Council had applied for the signage, and asked whether the ECDC car park was the reason for the proposed advertisement opposite the museum. Cllr Every explained that City of Ely Council had been involved with the project but the applicant was the District Council. The proposed siting of an advertisement opposite the museum entrance was due to the thoroughfare being a particularly busy one, and to encourage heritage visitors to explore further.

*Cllr Every left the Chamber.*

There were no further comments from the Officer so the Chairman invited questions from Members. Cllr Wilson referred to the earlier application, approved in December 2021, and asked whether there would be any more. The Planning Officer stated that she understood this to be the final one but, if further applications were to be forthcoming, then the cumulative effect would be considered.

In response to a question from Cllr Trapp, the Planning Team Leader explained that applications for advertisements could be fully approved, approved in part, or refused, and that if Members wished to amend the Officer's recommended conditions for approval then a proposal would need to be made and debated by Members.

Cllr Brown raised a concern regarding the location of a waste bin immediately adjacent to the proposed advertisement in Market Street and suggested that it might discourage use of the information point, particularly if the contents of the bin had attracted wasps. The Planning Team Leader explained that the proposed location of the advertisement could not be varied by Members, but suggested that an informative could be added to any approval decision requesting that the applicant consider moving the bin away from the sign.

The Chairman opened the debate. Cllr Ambrose Smith stated that she could see no argument against the application and she therefore proposed that it be approved in line with the Officer's recommendation. Cllr Wilson agreed and seconded the proposal. Cllr Trapp also agreed but referred back to the earlier comment regarding the bin at 72 Market Street which he remained concerned about. Cllr Hunt suggested that the Committee could add to the proposal the Planning Team Leader's suggestion that the applicant be asked to consider moving the bin. The proposer and seconder agreed.

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application ref 21/01487/ADI be APPROVED subject to the recommended conditions detailed in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

It was further resolved unanimously:

That the Planning Officer be instructed to request that the applicant consider moving the waste bin at 72 Market Street in order that the bin and digital sign be suitably distanced.

*1:26pm Cllr Every returned to the Chamber.*

**69. 21/01092/FUL – LAND ADJACENT TO 14 CHURCH ROAD, WICKEN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE (PLOTS 1-3)**

Toni Hylton, Senior Planning Officer, presented a report (W127, previously circulated) recommending refusal of an application seeking permission for the erection of three detached dwellings. The subsequent agenda item would consider an application for a further three dwellings on the adjacent site. As a matter of housekeeping, the Planning Officer showed a block plan provided by the applicant's agent which included the dwelling that had recently been constructed to the rear of no. 14 Church Road (the site's western neighbour) and was not yet shown on the OS plan.

Members were shown a location plan, aerial views and site plans illustrating the location of the application as part of a larger agricultural field on the eastern edge of Wicken. Photographs of the site and its immediate environment were also shown. Existing residential dwellings were located to the west of the site and on the opposite side of Church Road to the north. Part of the site was within the development envelope for the village but the rear portion allocated to plot 3 lay outside the development envelope. A site layout plan demonstrated that the proposed development would comprise two detached two-storey dwellings to the front and a detached single-storey dwelling to the rear, with access between the

two front plots. Elevations, dimensions and floor plans were shown for all three plots.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **In-depth development** – the proposed single-storey dwelling on plot 3 would be located behind plots 1 and 2. The dwelling to the rear of no. 14 was an anomaly and policy WIC2 stated that the site should be developed in a linear form. The proposed development was therefore considered to be contrary to policy WIC2.
- **Development envelope** – the dwelling proposed for plot 3 would be located outside the development envelope for Wicken. Policy GROWTH2 required new dwellings to be located within the development envelope. The proposed development was therefore considered to be contrary to policy GROWTH2.
- **Design** – the design of the dwellings was considered to be out of keeping with the nearby character of the village due to the nature of the modest semi-detached properties set well back on the northern side of the road, and bungalows as immediate neighbours along the southern side.
- **Other matters** – extant permission was in place for six dwellings on the land covered by this application and the following agenda item (21/01226/FUL). Members were shown images of the street scene and block plan for the extant permission (20/01393/RMA) and informed that it comprised two two-bed, two three-bed and two four-bed properties.

In summary, the application was recommended for refusal due to in-depth development contrary to policy WIC2, one dwelling being located outside the development envelope contrary to policy GROWTH2, and the design of the dwellings being out of keeping with the character of the area.

*1:33-1:35pm adjournment for Senior Support Officer to check in reception whether the registered objectors had arrived to speak.*

Having confirmed that the objectors were not present, the Chairman invited Andrew Fleet, the applicant's agent, to address the committee.

The agent stated that he believed that too great a weight had been given to policy WIC2. The policy stated that the site had been allocated for up to five dwellings, frontage development only, and including affordable housing. The extant permission for the site allowed six dwellings, with the red edge extended outside the development envelope, and with no affordable housing. There was therefore an existing permission for the site that did not comply with the policy and as such the current application's lack of compliance should be afforded much less weight. He considered that policy WIC1, which was very similar and covered land at the other end of the village, had been largely ignored when approving large detached dwellings in early 2021 and the Parish Council had not commented on the numbers or sizes of the dwellings in that application. The proposed development did not lie outside the red edge for the approved six dwellings and the back-land development at no. 14, which was clearly visible upon entering the village from the east, had already altered the character at that location. The other dwellings proposed in this application and the neighbouring one would also block the view of plot 3 when travelling along the road. The heights of the proposed dwellings had been substantially reduced and the scheme had been carefully designed to ensure no

overlooking or loss of privacy. The palette for the new properties would be taken from the existing 1940s properties along Church Road but the buildings would be much improved in design and by the inclusion of photovoltaic panels due to their southerly aspect. He reiterated his key point that there were historic approvals that were contrary to policies WIC1 and WIC2 and that there was therefore insufficient reason to refuse this application.

Cllr Brown asked for clarification regarding the red edge, the development envelope, and plot 3. The agent confirmed that plot 3 lay outside the development envelope but within the red edge, and the existing permission for the land within that red edge did not exclude any development. Cllr Jones commented that permission to build on the land had been granted when the Council could not demonstrate a 5-year land supply and therefore had little ability to control where development took place. The agent agreed that to be the case but added that, now that the property to the rear of no. 14 had been built, the in-depth development formed part of the character of the area. He also stated that the approval at the other end of the village, that he had previously mentioned as being contrary to policy WIC1, was given in 2021 when the 5-year land supply had been declared, and policies WIC1 and WIC2 were identical apart from the requirement within WIC2 for frontage development. Cllr Jones responded that the character of the village was very different from one end to the other and there was an open and rural aspect between the church and the site location.

Responding to questions from Cllr Trapp and Cllr Stubbs regarding the previously-approved scheme for six dwellings on the land covered by this application and that of the following agenda item, the agent explained that his client had not been the applicant for the extant permission. They did not consider it to be a commercial scheme and consequently did not wish to build it. The dwellings proposed in the new applications were larger than in the previous scheme and they had already received interest in three of them.

The Chairman then invited Parish Cllrs Liz Houghton and Jilly Rogers, Chair and Vice-Chair of Wicken Parish Council, to address the Committee. Parish Cllr Houghton expressed her strong support for the Officer's recommendations. She reiterated that the approved 2019 application for the wider site had the support of the Parish Council and would provide two two-bed dwellings, two three-bed dwellings and two four-bed dwellings, all of which would be frontage developments. The current application failed to meet the requirements of policy WIC2 due to the siting of plot 3 behind plot 1, which would also place that dwelling outside the development envelope. The bungalow to the rear of no. 14 had been allowed when the Council did not have a 5-year land supply, and it should not be considered a precedent for permitting back-land developments. The Parish Council had previously asked for, and evidenced the need for, two-bed properties in the village. The immediate street scene comprised bungalows and semi-detached houses without garages. Regarding the agent's reference to policy WIC1 at the other end of the village, the situations were not comparable and the original application for ten properties had been reduced to five. The current application deviated from the 2015 Local Plan and if it were to be permitted then a precedent would be set. Parish Cllr Rogers added that there was support from the Parish Council and the community for the principle of development at the Church Road site but it needed to be in keeping with the street scene and maintain the integrity of the Local Plan. The extant permission fitted those criteria whereas the new applications did not.

Cllr Hunt indicated the previously-shown street scene image for 20/01393/RMA and both Parish Councillors confirmed it to be the scheme that the Parish Council were in favour of. In answer to a question from Cllr Trapp, they also confirmed that the bungalow in the image was the existing property at no. 14, and that the frontages were similar to those of the existing properties opposite the site.

The Chairman invited further comments from the Senior Planning Officer, who advised that although the red line on the extant permission did extend outside the development envelope, the buildings were all within the envelope. She also reiterated that the permission had been granted when the Council could not demonstrate a 5-year land supply.

Cllr Jones asked for more information about the development at the other end of Wicken which the agent had stated was contrary to policy WIC1. The Senior Planning Officer responded that she had not dealt with that application and therefore could not comment in detail, but policy WIC2 included the requirement for frontage development only whereas policy WIC1 did not. The Planning Team Leader added that the two ends of Wicken were very different and therefore a dwelling or scheme could be in keeping with the street scene in one location but not in the other. Cllr Downey questioned the requirement stated in both policies that 30% affordable housing should be provided in line with policy HOU3. The Planning Team Leader confirmed Cllr Downey's belief that policy HOU3 was only relevant to major developments of more than ten dwellings, 1,000sqm or over a hectare, and therefore would not apply to this application. Consequently, the Local Planning Authority could not require affordable housing to be delivered on the site.

The Chairman opened the debate. Cllr Ambrose Smith stated that she could not see any issues with the proposal. She considered the layouts to be reasonable and the provision of a bungalow to be beneficial. Based on the plans she did not anticipate overshadowing of no. 14 and she did not object to the positioning of plot 3 since she did not consider the back-land development of 14a to be offensive. The agent had explained that design changes had been made from the extant permission for commercial reasons and had indicated that there was interest in the revised scheme. In summary, she could see no harm in approving the scheme.

Cllr Stubbs expressed her disagreement. Although the applicant did not consider the existing scheme to be commercially viable there was no evidence to suggest that another provider would have the same opinion. The Parish Council were supportive of the existing scheme which contained affordable homes and she was concerned about the Committee's duty of care to protect the Local Plan and not set a precedent for building in conflict to the requirements within it. She proposed that the application should be refused. Cllr Hunt seconded the proposal.

Cllr Downey received confirmation from Cllr Stubbs that her reference to affordable homes in the existing scheme concerned smaller properties rather than affordable housing in the form of shared ownership or rental schemes for eligible households. He stated that he had initially been in favour of refusal due to the requirement in WIC2 for affordable housing, however, having heard from Officers that this was not the case, he could not see the harm in the scheme. He had not been convinced that it would not complement the street scene, or that it would be detrimental to visual amenity, or that there would be harm caused by the appearance of a cul-de-sac. Regarding adherence to the Local Plan, he considered that a precedent for



deviation was already in place due to the lack of affordable housing in the extant permission.

Cllr Wilson commented that many villages in the District were vulnerable to the breaking of development envelopes and now that the Council were in a position to enforce them they should be careful to do so. New properties should also be designed in keeping with the surrounding area. He supported the Officer's recommendation for refusal due to the location of plot 3 outside the village's development envelope. Cllrs Brown, Every, Trapp, Jones and Hunt agreed, with Cllr Brown adding that there was nothing exceptional in the design to warrant permitting development outside the envelope, and Cllr Every commented that it had been a central Government edict to reduce the social housing requirement for developments below ten properties and therefore that apparent policy deviation was irrelevant. Cllrs Trapp and Jones both expressed concern about the proposed back-land development and the better mix of dwelling sizes in the extant permission. Cllr Hunt stressed the importance of listening to the views of the Parish Council who had welcomed the principle of development on the site but objected to this particular design, and the Committee's responsibility to protect the Local Plan and not allow dwellings outside the development envelope.

It was resolved with 8 votes in favour, 2 votes against, and 0 abstentions:

That planning application ref 21/01092/FUL be REFUSED for the reasons detailed in paragraph 1.1 of the Officer's report.

**70. 21/01226/FUL – LAND ADJACENT TO 14 CHURCH ROAD, WICKEN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE (PLOTS 4-6)**

Toni Hylton, Senior Planning Officer, presented a report (W128, previously circulated) recommending refusal of an application seeking permission for the erection of three detached four-bedroom dwellings on a site immediately adjacent to that of the previous application. As a matter of housekeeping, the Planning Officer drew Member's attention to the Trees Officer's comments that had been circulated to all Members after publication of the agenda papers: in summary, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) was required and there was a lack of detail regarding landscaping in the application.

Members were shown a location plan, an aerial photograph, and site plans illustrating the location of the application as part of a larger agricultural field on the eastern edge of Wicken. A site layout plan demonstrated that the proposed development would comprise three detached dwellings each with a detached garage to the rear and, due to electricity pylons, there was a wide strip of land between plots 4 and 5 that could not be built on. Elevations, dimensions and floor plans were shown for all three plots; the proposed dwellings for plots 4 and 5 were identical but handed whereas the building design for plot 6 was slightly different. Photographs of the site and its immediate environment were also shown. Existing residential dwellings were located to the west of the site and on the opposite side of Church Road to the north.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Design** – the design of the dwellings was considered to be out of keeping with the nearby character of the village due to the nature of the modest semi-

detached properties set well back on the northern side of the road and bungalows as immediate neighbours along the southern side.

- **Other matters** – extant permission was in place for six dwellings on the land covered by this application and the neighbouring application (21/01902/FUL). Members were shown images of the street scene and block plan for the extant permission (20/01393/RMA) and informed that it comprised two two-bed, two three-bed and two four-bed properties. The dimensions of the buildings in the extant permission and the current application were displayed and compared. Although the proposed buildings would be slightly lower than those in the approved scheme, the floor areas would be considerably larger.

In summary, the application was recommended for refusal due to the design being out of keeping with the character of the immediate surroundings.

The Chairman invited Andrew Fleet, the applicant's agent, to address the committee. The agent stated that many of his comments on the previous application also applied to this one regarding the reduced weight that should be given to the housing policy. He informed Members that the dimensions provided by the Officer had included the garages, and reminded them that policy WIC1, which was very similar to WIC2, applied at the other end of the village where three large detached four-bedroom properties had been permitted. The three proposed dwellings had lower ridge heights than those allowed under the extant permission for the site and would therefore result in a lower building height on the entrance to the village. He did not consider the designs to be elaborate when compared to the dwellings opposite, and the materials palette had been taken from those properties although the proposed dwellings would have better thermal values with air-source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels. Officer concerns regarding cohesion had been addressed and the proposal was a frontage style as required. In addition, there had been a recent approval for a substantial dwelling adjacent to the old butcher's shop.

Cllr Brown asked for clarity regarding the plots' locations with respect to the development envelope. The agent explained that the Officer's diagrams had indicated that a small portion of the site may be outside the development envelope but he emphasised that the location of the built form was no different from that in the extant permission. In response to a question from Cllr Trapp he confirmed that plot 6 was furthest to the east and would be ~1.3m lower than the equivalent building in the extant permission.

Cllr Ambrose Smith commented that much had been made of the immediate street scene of plain and simple pre- and post-war dwellings, and questioned whether similar designs would be saleable as new properties. The agent replied that perceptions changed over time and those designs would not be considered to have kerb appeal if built nowadays.

In response to a question from Cllr Every regarding the implications of the refusal of permission for the neighbouring application, he stated that he would need to seek the applicant's views but his personal opinion was that there would not be a gap between the current site and the bungalow at no. 14 since a new application would be submitted on that site for three dwellings in a frontage development. Due

to the size of the site they would be smaller than those in the application that had been refused.

The Chairman then invited Parish Cllrs Liz Houghton and Jilly Rogers, Chair and Vice-Chair of Wicken Parish Council, to address the Committee. Parish Cllr Houghton stated that the Parish Council strongly opposed the proposal and therefore supported the Officer's recommendation for refusal. An acceptable and approved scheme that complied with policy WIC2 was already in existence. The proposal under consideration was for three dominant four-bedroom dwellings with a 15m gap between two of the plots in order to accommodate the overhead cables. They would be out of character since most of the properties in the immediate area were widely spaced semi-detached properties without garages. The development would have an impact on the vista to Wicken Fen along the approach to the village, and would not enhance the area. WIC2 required a mix of properties and the Parish Council wanted market-led two-bedroom dwellings. Approval of the application would deviate from the Local Plan. Parish Cllr Rogers added that although reference had been made to other parts of the village it was important to recognise that, although small, the character of the village was quite varied. The Parish Council was careful to consider the context of the specific area and, in this case, that was the entrance to the village, the vista to Wicken Fen, and the immediate street scene.

In response to a question from Cllr Jones regarding the butcher's site referenced by the agent, Parish Cllr Houghton commented that the setting was different for that property and that Wicken had suffered from speculative development when there was no 5-year land supply. She thought that the approval for that development may have been given during that period.

Cllr Trapp asked about the need for affordable housing in Wicken and Parish Cllr Houghton explained that there were two affordable housing schemes for a total of 24 homes. The Parish Council was keen to see market-led two-bedroom dwellings because there was very little opportunity for people to purchase modest homes in the village.

The Officer had no additional comments to make. Cllr Jones asked for clarification regarding which part(s) of the built form would be outside the development envelope; the Senior Planning Officer stated that it would be the garages and driveways of all three plots. The dwellings would all be within the development envelope. She confirmed to Cllr Brown that the comments from the Trees Officer could be addressed by condition if the application was approved. In response to questions from Cllr Trapp, she confirmed that plot 6 would be narrower but deeper than in the extant permission, that although the ridge height was lower the plans still indicated full ceiling height in the first-floor bedrooms, and that aerial images suggested the housing density of the larger properties in this proposal would be slightly lower than the surrounding area.

Cllr Stubbs asked what impact there would be on the Local Plan if the Committee approved the application. The Planning Team Leader explained that the Officer's reason for recommending refusal was not related to the 5-year land supply; the principle for development on this site had already been established but the policies required a high-quality design and the design of the development was not considered to be acceptable.

The Chairman then opened the debate. Cllr Jones commented that, following the refusal of planning permission for the adjacent site, a new plan for the overall site would be preferable to the construction of the three proposed dwellings with either a large gap to the property at no. 14 or three dwellings squeezed into a site that had been planned for two.

Cllr Wilson stated that permission had already been granted for dwellings on the site and therefore he could see no reason to refuse the application. Unlike the previous application, the only concern was the relationship with the existing street scene and whilst he agreed that the larger properties did not link well to the smaller dwellings opposite he did not consider them to be unsuitable for the plot. The gap mentioned by Cllr Jones would not be a long-term issue because the developer would re-apply with smaller dwellings, thus resulting in a mix of properties. He therefore proposed that the application be approved and Cllr Ambrose Smith seconded his motion. Cllr Brown agreed with Cllr Wilson's assessment.

Cllr Trapp commented that all houses were marketable if priced appropriately. Although not opposed to the construction of large houses, it was important for villages to have a balance and mix of properties in order to remain more widely affordable.

Cllr Stubbs stated that she agreed with points made by both Cllr Wilson and Cllr Trapp but on balance placed the greatest importance on ensuring that villages remained affordable. She therefore proposed that the application be refused, as recommended in the Officer's report. Cllr Trapp seconded the proposal. Cllr Hunt added his agreement that a wide range of property sizes was beneficial to a village and that there was a need for smaller properties to be available for private purchase. This reminded the Committee of their responsibility to safeguard the character of the area.

Cllr Wilson's motion to approve the application, on the grounds that it did not diverge too much from the general housing in Wicken and the design was acceptable, was put to the vote and was lost with 4 votes in favour, 6 votes against and 0 abstentions.

Cllr Stubbs' motion to refuse the application, in line with the Officer's recommendation, was then put to the vote.

It was resolved with 7 votes in favour, 3 votes against, and 0 abstentions:

That planning application ref 21/01226/FUL be REFUSED for the reasons detailed in paragraph 1.1 of the Officer's report.

*2:51pm-2:55pm meeting adjourned for a brief comfort break.*

## **71. PLANNING PERFORMANCE REPORT – NOVEMBER 2021**

Andrew Phillips, Planning Team Leader, presented a report (W130, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in November 2021. He informed Members that Joanne Braybrook, Planning Assistant, had left the Council since the last meeting and a new Planning Officer, Isabella Taylor, had joined the department to fill a different vacancy. Although there had been a dip in

the number of applications received in October, it had risen again and Officers continued to have very high case-loads. He highlighted that despite the high case-loads the majority of applications were validated within 5 days and determined on time. He also drew Members' attention to the figures indicating that the Council continued to be a pro-growth authority by approving most applications. Two public inquiries would be held in January and the details were in the report.

In response to a question from Cllr Brown, the Planning Team Leader explained that the validated and determined applications in the first Table were not the same proposals, e.g. two major applications had been validated and a separate major application had been determined.

Referencing the appeals that had been decided in November, Cllr Every commented that 5/7 had been allowed and asked for more information since that seemed a high proportion. The Planning Team Leader emphasised that appeals were also being dismissed and he was not aware of any costs having been awarded against the Council, therefore the lost appeals represented a difference of professional opinion rather than the Inspector having identified a fundamental error. Officers would continue to ensure compliance with policies when determining applications. Cllr Trapp added that he believed this to be the first monthly report showing more appeals allowed than dismissed.

It was resolved:

That the Planning Performance Report for November 2021 be noted.

*The meeting concluded at 3:05pm.*