



### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 3**

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee facilitated via the Zoom Video Conferencing System at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 at 1:00pm.

#### **PRESENT**

Cllr Bill Hunt (Chairman)  
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith  
Cllr Sue Austen  
Cllr David Brown  
Cllr Matthew Downey  
Cllr Lavinia Edwards  
Cllr Simon Harries (as a Substitute Member)  
Cllr Alec Jones  
Cllr Joshua Schumann  
Cllr Lisa Stubbs  
Cllr John Trapp

#### **OFFICERS**

Emma Barral – Planning Officer  
Angela Briggs – Planning Team Leader  
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager  
Rachael Forbes – Planning Officer  
Andrew Phillips – Planning Team Leader  
Rebecca Saunt – Planning Manager  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer  
Angela Tyrrell – Senior Legal Assistant  
Russell Wignall – Legal Assistant

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mrs Louise Barnes – Objector (Agenda Item 5)  
Mr Graeme Hall– Supporter (Agenda Item 5)  
Dr Lydia Smith – Applicant (Agenda Item 6)  
Cllr Stuart Smith – Parish Council Representative (Agenda 5)  
Cllr Gareth Wilson - Ward Member (Agenda Item 5)

#### **55. ROLL CALL, APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

It was noted that Councillor Harries would act as a Substitute Member for Councillor Wilson for the duration of the meeting.

#### **56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.



## 57. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

## 58. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Members should have received an additional document submitted by NIAB, which had arrived shortly before this meeting. From the next Planning Committee meeting cut-off dates for late submissions would be introduced. This would be set at 48 hours before the commencement of the Planning Committee meeting and any submissions received after that would not be accepted. Such late submissions put additional pressure on Council officers and gave Members no chance to check their contents.
- Members were reminded that they should concentrate, and comment, on material planning issues when considering applications and not on non-relevant issues. A list of planning issues Members should consider would be circulated in the following few days.
- As this was the last Planning Committee before Christmas, Members, officers and the public were wished a happy and prosperous New Year.

## 59. **20/00880/OUT – OS LAND PARCEL 7216, BURY LANE, HADDENHAM**

The Committee considered a report, reference V120 previously circulated, for an outline application to change the use from agricultural land to recreational land to create a new recreational ground for Haddenham Parish Council to include pitches, parking, changing rooms, access and associated works.

The Planning Officer advised the Committee that it should note the comments from the Countryside Charity, Cambridge and Peterborough branch, received after the committee report was published. This was an outline application for land for recreational use on a site to the west of Haddenham, that could be accessed via a single track off Bury Lane or via New Town Road leading in to Pocket Park adjacent to the application site.

The application site comprised an agricultural field, which was outside the Conservation Area and development envelope. The application sought outline planning consent with all matters being reserved. Haddenham Parish Council already had a recreation ground with two football pitches but, given the shortage of pitches available, several village teams had to play outside the village. The Parish Council had described this scheme as the first phase of a wider recreational scheme within the site, which initially would provide three additional pitches, one full-size and two smaller ones, with access and parking



for thirty cars. There were potentially two options for vehicular access to this site – via New Town Road through Pocket Park or via Bury Lane through an existing gate.

The main considerations for this application were: the principle of development; visual amenity; residential amenity; highway safety and car parking; flood risk and drainage; biodiversity; trees and other matters.

#### Principle of Development

Planning Policy COM4 was relevant in this case, as it referred to new community facilities, and in exceptional circumstances facilities may be provided in the open countryside where there was no suitable and available land within a settlement. It stated that the new facilities should: be well located and accessible to its catchment population; not have a significant adverse impact due to traffic generated or on the character of the locality; demonstrate opportunities to maximise shared use and be designed to facilitate future adaptation for alternative community or shared uses.

While the development would not be within the settlement of Haddenham, as there were no other suitable sites available, it was well suited to the catchment area. Additional traffic would only be generated on Saturdays and Sundays, with some evening weekday use, during the football season and occasionally at other times. However, the Highways Department had raised serious concerns about capacity along New Town Road.

The impact on the character and appearance of the locality and neighbour amenity would depend on the extent of development. The distances from the settlement boundary to the football pitches would not result in significant harm to the visual or residential amenity.

Some of the requirements of Policy COM4 had been met but others had not, therefore the principle of development was not considered acceptable in relation to the scale and nature of traffic generated.

#### Visual Amenity

The site was in the open countryside but any large buildings could result in visual harm to the countryside setting. The scale and size of the proposed changing rooms were unknown, but any modestly sized buildings would not significantly harm the visual amenity. Any lighting would have to be carefully assessed, however the applicant does not envision floodlighting for the pitches in this phase. A 3 metre high wire mesh or similar fencing would be provided to the areas around the site as necessary. However, with details being unclear it was difficult to assess any potential impact. The proposed change of use to recreational use would not in itself cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal could generally conform with Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan.

The site was set away from the Conservation Area boundary, with only the northern side of Bury Lane close to its boundary. As matters of appearance,



layout and access were not being considered the extent of visual harm on the northern edge of Bury Lane was difficult to assess. However, any substantial changes to Bury Lane would likely affect the Conservation Area along this rural edge.

#### Residential Amenity

There was more than sufficient distance in the indicative layout away from residential properties to prevent overlooking or overshadowing. The full impact on residential amenity would be assessed at the reserved matters stage, once all other details were submitted. Any future floodlighting would have to be carefully assessed, but details on this were not available. There had also not been any objection from Environmental Health over noise pollution. However, there were so many unknown issues with this application this may affect the layout of the scheme.

#### Highway Safety and Car Parking

The access to the site was reserved for future consideration. Where access is a reserved matter, the outline application must state where access points to the development would be situated. The applicant had provided options for access, either via New Town Road or via Bury Lane. It was not clear whether both would be used to access the site. County Highways had raised concerns relating to New Town Road not being suitable for the vehicle numbers and types that would be generated by this proposal. It considered Bury Lane to be a potential option, though this option was not preferred by Highways or officers because it was only a single track. Highways would not want to upgrade it to adoptable standards, as it would have to become a two-way road with a footpath. If this option was pursued then a full and thorough investigation and design by the applicant should be provided prior to the application being determined. Overall, County Highways believed that the application would have a negative impact on the highways, in relation to capacity and amenity issues, and could not safely be accommodated. Therefore, the application does not comply with the aims of COM4 and COM7 of the Local Plan. Any further intensification of use of this road would become a serious amenity issue for residents. The layout for adequate parking for cars and cyclists on the site would be reserved for future consideration.

#### Biodiversity

Policy ENV7 and the Natural Environment Supplementary Planning Document sought to protect existing biodiversity, as well as substantial improvements to ensure net gain. Natural England's standing advice was that the full impact on protected species be considered before determination. The Council made it clear that evidence on protected species be provided prior to determination. As the layout on this site had not been agreed and no ecology report submitted, it was difficult to review the potential impact on habitats and biodiversity. There were significant unknowns, as this was an outline planning application. The creation of the football pitches may have a limited impact, but the changing rooms and parking area may have a bigger impact. Although officers had not found any significant biodiversity issues when visiting the site, third party comments had been reviewed and the possibility of protected species being



present was acknowledged. The ecology of the area could not be assessed as no ecology survey had been provided. ENV7 states that an ecology survey must accompany an application where the potential for protected species was suspected. Without this it was not possible to overcome the concerns raised or assess whether the proposal would have a detrimental impact on biodiversity in the local area. All proposals should provide mitigation measures to lead to a net gain in biodiversity and this advice was given at the pre-application stage. The proposal failed to show that there would not be any significant harms to the ecology and so was contrary to relevant policies.

### Other Matters

Flood Risk – the site is within Flood Zone 1 and was considered acceptable in terms of flood risk.

Trees – any access should use the existing track as much as possible, to reduce tree loss, with any additional planting as necessary in mitigation.

Overall there was a need for this development and there was support for it. It was in a sustainable location with no adverse visual amenity impact. On balance though, there would be significant and demonstrable harm to highways and biodiversity which would outweigh any benefits. Therefore, the application was recommended for refusal.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Democratic Services Officer read out a statement submitted by Mrs Barnes, which included a list of names and addresses of 75 local residents. It stated:

On behalf of the local residents listed at the end of this statement, thank you for the opportunity to summarise our objections to the above planning application. We feel there are many omissions and failings in the application itself, which have been referenced and outlined more fully in several of the written objections already submitted. We would like to make it clear that despite the proposed loss of a community green space (the Pocket Park), and the big impact this proposal will have on local residents, an official consultation has not been carried out by Haddenham Parish Council. We dispute the statement in the Design and Access Statement that this project is going ahead with the support of the whole village. Whilst we fully understand the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings have been conducted remotely relating to this application, so the same could have been done for the consultation.

Firstly, we would like to emphasise that we feel the inclusion of the Pocket Park within this development, and its degradation from a designated play area to vehicular access for a recreation ground is completely unacceptable.

Residents of Newtown Road and the wider village (including Parish Councillors at the time) obtained grants and planted over 200 native trees and hedgerows before the park opened in 1999. Some of these residents and/or their families still live on the road today. The Pocket Park is clearly recorded as a legitimate open space (play area) in the information provided by Haddenham Parish Council for the ECDC 2012-2013 Play Audit, furthermore it provides 80% of the dedicated toddler play space in Haddenham and Aldreth, and is currently the only play area at this end of the village. The Parish Council have erected football goal posts on the park. It is also marked on the central large map of the village's green spaces on the High Street. As such it is definitely a community facility, and putting an access road through it removes the facility as a safe place for children to play, and for wider community use for relaxation and leisure.



The suggestion that disruption will be minimal as the new development will use the existing track to the Pump House is misleading - anyone who has visited the park will know there is no visible track on the grass. There is currently only light intermittent use of this access. The provision of playing fields in no way makes up for the loss of the Pocket Park which is used in a completely different way, and is currently enjoyed not only by children (for natural, free, 'loose end' play); but also by dog walkers, friends and families, childminders and the Ark Baby and Toddler Group. Sport England have advised in their response to the proposal that 'playing fields shall be used for Outdoor Sport and for no other purpose.' Both the ECDC Local Plan (COM 3), and the National Planning Policy Framework recognise the importance of retaining community facilities such as open spaces and play areas, and state that their loss for proposals involving different community facilities are not appropriate in relation to open spaces.

Residents see a huge range of animal species in the park, field and Bury Lane - including protected species like bats and rare birds like song thrushes. Removing some of the trees and hedgerows, which are now reaching maturity, will disrupt habitats and wildlife corridors, and decrease biodiversity. There are several nearby ponds and the habitat is suitable for newts, so we feel there should have been a biodiversity assessment.

We understand that at this point the application has access as a reserved matter, but both the Parish Council and Planning Officer for this application (in consultation emails) have acknowledged that the cost and work needed to provide access via Bury Lane is likely to be prohibitive. Access is shown via Newtown Road and the Pocket Park in the submitted plans, and the Design and Access Statement mentions traffic via the A1123. We would therefore like to comment on how unsuitable Newtown Road is for this development (both for the initial phase of three football pitches, and for the future further development envisioned). We are pleased to see that many of our concerns over the suitability of Newtown Road were highlighted in the Highways Consultation Report.

Newtown Road is a 100% residential cul-de-sac so the expected increase in traffic will have a huge impact. It is currently a safe street where children can play with their friends (which is recognised as important by government schemes like Street Play). This will no longer be safe, especially as the increase in traffic will be at the times children would currently be outside playing (Saturdays, Sundays and light evenings).

Lots of residents park on the road as they do not have enough driveway space (especially during weekends and evenings). Extra cars navigating the road will cause traffic to back up onto the major A1123 which will be dangerous.

The road is not suitable for minibuses and/or coaches to access the recreation ground. We understand that Gareth Wilson has stated that there has been a misunderstanding of the traffic this development will generate. We feel it is contradictory to claim that there is a desperate need for these pitches due to the large number of matches that need to be hosted in the village, yet claim that this will not generate a significant increase in traffic on a residential cul-de-sac. If teams are not using larger vehicles for transport (especially in the first phase of the development), this will result in more individual cars. Given there are plans for 30 car parking spaces and overflow parking, it is clear a large number of vehicles are expected on the site.

Access by emergency services to the pitches and residents houses may be very difficult with the increased traffic and parking.

30 parking spaces does not appear sufficient when cross-over between three matches (players, officials and supporters) is taken into account. The field is often water-logged so overflow parking on the field in the winter months may not be possible, and these cars will end up parking on Newtown Road or West End - affecting safety and the amenity of properties.

There are no cycle paths in the village, and access will be via the A1123 which is a busy road with lots of HGVs. The public transport provision in Haddenham is also poor, meaning that visiting teams will have to drive. The field is not centrally located within the village meaning that many village players are also likely to arrive by car.

There are also concerns over the development on the field itself, and the impact on wildlife corridors of the buildings, car park and fencing. The land is low lying and prone to water



logging (an issue raised specifically by neighbouring land owners). The land is not within the development envelope for Haddenham. Haddenham Parish Council have recommended refusal of planning permission on similar sites, such as land on Hillrow. This was on the basis of it being longstanding pasture of environmental importance, and being situated outside of the development envelope - which they described as seriously undermining the Local plan and work put into it. We are pleased to see that the report by Emma Barral outlines the various environmental policies of ECDC that should have been considered and addressed prior to this application being made. The report by CPRE also highlights the huge environmental importance of the area and the detrimental impact this development will have.

There have been several incidences of anti-social behaviour in Haddenham at the current Recreation Ground and the Arkenstall Centre Car Park, despite them being in a central village location. There is concern from local residents that the more isolated position of this new recreational facility will attract similar issues.

In summary we feel that on the basis that it involves degradation of the Pocket Park from a dedicated open space to an access road for a recreation field this planning application should be refused. It also is outside of the planning envelope for the village, and likely to involve access via Newtown Road which is unsuitable for the volume and type of traffic. Thank you for your consideration.

In reply to Councillor Brown's enquiry, Mrs Barnes explained that there were goalposts on Pocket Park itself. Councillor Trapp queried the parking on New Town Road and it was revealed that after work time, in the evenings and over the weekends there were more parked vehicles. There had been at least one incident where the emergency services had not been able to access the road due to cars parked in the street.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Hall spoke on behalf of Haddenham Football Club and made the following comments:

- The growing success of the football club had led to a situation where the current facilities were not sufficient to sustain the club and its future growth.
- This application was a real opportunity for the Parish Council to give something back to the local community.
- Other locations had been looked at over a 2 to 3 year period, but this land was the only one that had come forward as being feasible for a new recreational facility. This was the only option.
- East Cambridgeshire District Council's Corporation Plan listed the provision of high quality community facilities as a priority, so this application would help the Council deliver on its objectives.
- There was a strong possibility that this project would attract other funding.
- In relation to the highways and parking issues – there had been no objections to the previous application for this site. The current objections centred around the use of coaches but coaches had never been used by teams before. So, that objection was flawed.
- The current recreation ground would still be used, so the games would be split between the two facilities and kick off times could be managed. This would mean that traffic would be kept to an acceptable level.
- Parking would be provided within the site, via the Pocket Park.



- There was local demand for extra facilities, as around 200 children played football, ranging in ages from 4 to 18, with 90% of them living in the village.
- Currently 3 teams had to play outside the village and 2 at the primary school.
- This new facility would be of benefit to the children, would help sustain the football club, was needed now and had been supported by 2/3 of residents in a recent survey.
- It was fully expected that all the issues would be addressed at the full planning stage.

Councillor Brown asked where 3 teams had to play and it was revealed that they had to go to Wilburton. Councillor Jones was concerned about possible anti-social behaviour at that location and wondered whether there would be any access restrictions imposed on parking there. Could funding be obtained just for outside sport? Would Pocket Park remain separate from the new facility? Mr Hall suggested that the new facility could be gated to prevent possible anti-social behaviour, though this was usually caused by people who did not drive. Additional funding could possibly be obtained from Sport England. The play area was a small rectangular area by the pump house in Pocket Park. An access road could be made through Pocket Park, but an element of the park would remain. Councillor Downey noted the 75 objectors mentioned in Mrs Barnes statement and the potential 200 children that took part in football, but asked how many people were in support of this scheme. Mr Hall reiterated his point that 2/3 of people from a survey had expressed support. Councillor Trapp queried whether Bury Lane had been considered as an access to the site. Mr Hall stated that access via Bury Lane could be an alternative, though that would involve more work and was not preferred.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Smith spoke on behalf of Haddenham Parish Council and made the following comments:

- A statement in support of this application from the Chairman of the Parish Council had been circulated to the Committee beforehand.
- This was an important project for the village and its children and it strategically aligned with the District Council's objectives.
- The outline application had been submitted to gauge the level of support for the project, to see if it would be possible.
- If it was, then the Parish Council would seek to purchase the land with the support of the Football Association.
- Once that was done then a detailed plan could be drawn up.
- The project would not proceed until the Parish Council's Planning Committee had agreed to it.
- Some issues had to be resolved and the Parish Council would expect to address them and work up the details.

Councillor Smith answered Councillor Trapp's query by stating that there was a car turning point at the bottom of New Town Road, not a car park, but parking would not be a great problem. Councillor Ambrose Smith asked what plans the Parish Council had for the future, to make a larger space for children to play. The



Committee was informed that a small access road to the site could be put in and barricaded off so children could still play there, though large tankers frequently accessed the pump house on Pocket Park already. Councillor Austen wanted to know if all the points in the Parish Council Chairman's statement had been covered. Councillor Smith stated that the statement covered the history of the site and that the Parish Council would not buy the land until it was sure it could be used. Councillor Schumann was concerned that Highways may not have been fully consulted, but Councillor Smith explained that the Parish Council had spoken to this Council's planning officers, on the previous application, and Highways had no objections at that point. However, some residents had raised concerns, so that application had been withdrawn. Since then Highways had changed its mind and was now objecting.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Wilson spoke in his capacity as a Ward Member for Haddenham and made the following comments:

- He had supported the work of the Parish Council Chairman in bringing this project forward over the last 3 years.
- The Parish Council had been told that it had not been necessary to provide an environment statement as it was only an outline application, but apparently that was not the case so this would get organised.
- With regard to the environment survey, this was only a field so it would not make much difference changing it to football pitches.
- It was important to encourage children to participate in sport and it was remarkable that the village had 5 girl teams.
- The Parish Council had taken a proactive view to provide suitable facilities.
- The Parish Council had previously submitted a more detailed application, which had not been objected to by Highways, but this had been withdrawn because of a lot of objections to the use of Pocket Park.
- There was no intention to use Pocket Park other than as a children's play area and would be continue to be used that way.
- The objections from Highways was due to a simple misunderstanding, as the Parish Council was not intending to build a massive structure because the facility would only be a reserve pitch.
- The Parish Council had chosen to check the feasibility of the scheme, therefore an outline application had been submitted instead.
- The Parish Council would consult the village, after the COVID-19 restrictions, and would then decide on the access to the site.
- The facility would cost a lot of money to create, so the Parish Council needed indicative support for the scheme.
- Once that was achieved, the Parish Council could come back with the access sorted and an ecology report.
- This site was the only flat field found that would be suitable for the extra football pitches need and the Committee was asked to support in principle the application for the additional facilities.

Councillor Hunt understood that adult football would take place on the existing pitch with the new site for the children and, in the future, if the road access was



off Aldreth Road, then pedestrian access to Pocket Park from New Town Road would be provided. Councillor Wilson confirmed that the existing recreation ground had a full-sized football pitch, whereas the new field would have 3 smaller pitches, the exact sizes determined by the age groups using them. It would be logical to provide access for pedestrians in the future from New Town Road. Councillor Downey could not see that there would be any loss of biodiversity, but if any were found during the biodiversity survey would the Parish Council step back from the project? It was noted that 75 people had objected, but was there any indication of how many people supported the application? Councillor Wilson answered that any issues over projected species would be sorted out. It was difficult to gauge the exact number of residents who would support the scheme, though the Neighbourhood Plan survey had indicated that a lot of people thought the village needed extra facilities. Councillor Brown wondered whether the Parish Council had expected objections from Highways on this new application. Councillor Wilson revealed that the outline application had been dealt with by a different Highways officer to the previous application, but the new objection was irrelevant. The Water Company regularly got its lorries down New Town Road, so coaches would not be a problem, though they would definitely not be used. Councillor Harries noted the major objection from the Campaign to Protect Rural England due to the unique nature of Bury Lane. Councillor Wilson acknowledged that Bury Lane was a green lane used by farm vehicles, but cars could get down there without disturbing the hedgerows or wildlife. Councillor Jones noted the proposed use of 3metre high wire fencing and asked what type of hedging was in existence and whether the new fencing would be intrusive? Councillor Wilson explained that the fencing would be erected behind the goals and alongside a walkway around the edge of the field, for pedestrians and dog walkers, and would be see through. In response to Councillor Trapp's question, Councillor Wilson stated that coaches would definitely not be used.

Councillor Schumann thanked the Case Officer for a comprehensive update and asked if further pre-application advice was taken from the Local Highways Authority in between applications. The Case Officer could not confirm this, but assumed no additional pre-application advice had been sought.

Councillor Jones then asked the Planning Officer about the width of New Town Road. The Planning Officer stated that it was a narrow road making it difficult for cars to pass between parked cars. The applicant had been provided with pre-application advice and Highways had been formally consulted on the previous full application. Highways had raised concerns about parking, but not on highway safety, and had wanted clarity on parking and parking spaces. Several amendments to that application had been suggested but, as the details were unclear, that application had been withdrawn.

With reference to biodiversity, all applications had to be accompanied with information on biodiversity and include any mitigations where necessary. The applicant was told this, as information on potential protected species was needed. Natural England Standing Advice clearly stated that no conditions could be attached relating to such surveys.



Councillor Schumann asked whether Highways could have been consulted further. The Committee was assured that they had been and the Case Officer had been in discussions with them. Councillor Schumann then suggested that the debate be curtailed, as Members had implemented policies on protected species meaning applicants had to go through particular steps before submitting an application. On two previous occasions the Committee had noted that this had not been undertaken and had consequently refused the applications. The Council had this policy and should not agree to a subsequent survey as a condition. Highways had also objected on clear grounds. This application fell short of the necessary standards, could bring the Council into disrepute if rules were changed and therefore proposed it should be refused.

Councillor Hunt expressed the view that the Parish Council had to understand that all Members would support what it was trying to do, as there was a need for it. Haddenham was expanding and anything to get children in sport would be good. It would be essential to provide relevant facilities and a sports field would preserve the open space. However, permission should not be given without an ecology report being completed. Very little work had been done on the access from Aldreth Road as well.

Councillor Hunt then proposed that the application be deferred until next year to allow the applicants to complete an ecology survey and to carry out additional work on the access for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Councillor Schumann sought legal advice on whether the advice had changed since a previous application had been refused on similar grounds. The Legal Services Manager and Planning Manager advised the Committee that the advice from Natural England was clear, that the application should not be approved with a condition about an ecology survey. Without the relevant information the application should not go ahead but it was unclear whether it could be deferred, that was a decision for the Committee.

Councillor Harries was strongly in support of the proposal to defer, acknowledging that the application was not acceptable in its current form. He was concerned about the objections from Highways, as this could veto the application. Everybody supported the idea but the Parish Council had to ensure an effective consultation and engage with Highways to resolve the issues.

Councillor Downey accepted that there was not enough information to decide, so that was the whole point of deferring the application. The applicant should go away and obtain this information and bring it back to the Committee. Councillor Downey then seconded the proposal to defer the application.

Councillor Schumann proposed, duly seconded by Councillor Austen, that the officer's recommendation for refusal be agreed, as there was insufficient information to determine the application and to maintain consistency in the Committee's decision making, as at least two previous applications without an ecology survey had been refused. When put to the vote this proposal was lost.



The Committee then considered the proposal for deferral and when put to the vote this was declared carried.

It was resolved:

That planning application reference 20/00880/OUT be DEFERRED to next year to allow the applicants to complete an ecology survey and carry out further investigations in relation to the access for vehicular and pedestrian traffic to the site.

**60. 20/01145/FUL – NIAB AGRIGATE RESEARCH HUB, HASSE ROAD, SOHAM**

Emma Barral, Planning Officer, presented a report (reference V121, previously circulated) for an application for the installation of a solar array and associated development.

The Planning Officer reminded the Committee that revised plans had been received and an update circulated to Members that morning, that clarified the soft and hard landscaping on the site and the recommendation was to accept the amended plan. The only reason the application had come to the Committee for determination was because the scale of the development exceeded the limit set within the Council's Constitution for a delegated decision by officers.

The site was located north of Hasse Road outside Soham and was for a small scale solar array attached to an existing facility. It was anticipated that it would generate enough power equivalent to the provision required for 19 to 20 households. It would be located within an underused part of the site and the northern part would be retained as grassland, in accordance with the revised plan. It would include for electrical generation storage module, which would house associated equipment. The power it generated would be fed into the main incoming board on the site. The solar panels would be aligned in four rows, 2.7 metres above ground level.

The main considerations in the determination of this application were: principle of development; visual amenity; residential amenity; highway safety; trees and landscaping; heritage assets; biodiversity; flood risk and drainage; other matters.

Principle of Development

This application related to a wider upgrade and refurbishment project by NIAB and aimed for an improvement in renewable energy on the site. It would have significant benefits to the business and the local area. It also complied with the National Planning Policy Framework and Council policies to secure opportunities for renewable energy generation in the district and to contribute towards mitigation of climate change. Therefore, the principle of development was considered acceptable.



### Visual Amenity

Although the site was located in the countryside, the proposals would only be a minor addition, would be screened and so would only have a minor visual impact.

### Residential Amenity

Due to its location, being a substantial distance from nearby dwellings, it would have very little impact on residential amenity.

### Highway Safety

Although the site was off Hasse Road, and would use the existing access, it was not anticipated that there would be long-term traffic issues.

### Flooding and Drainage

The site was in Flood Zone 3, a high risk area, and surface water would runoff directly to the ground beneath the solar panels, and would partly infiltrate or runoff to the nearest watercourse. Surface water would not travel into the site and during a flood event it was unlikely there would be standing water on the site. Subject to the agreement of a suitable condition in relation to surface water drainage, this would be considered acceptable.

### Other Matters

The existing trees would be retained. The development would not affect any natural conservation sites. As the site was not located near any airfields, the solar panels would not be large enough to cause problems through glint and glare. The revised plan, coupled with ecology requirements, were considered agreeable.

Therefore, the application as amended was recommended for approval.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr Smith, on behalf of the Applicant, made the following comments:

- The hub was set up in 2015 on a brownfield site to support Agritech businesses.
- It was a unique incubator and NIAB wished to continue its improvement.
- With the cost of electricity rising, there were concerns that the business would not be able to continue with its experiments due to high electricity usage.
- The proposal was in accordance with local policies.
- The solar panels would be for demonstration, which was why they were wanted on the ground and not on the roof of a building.
- The application would comply with current legislation and would have no significant impacts on the local area.
- Although the solar panels would only cover a small area, they would make a big difference.
- To support biodiversity on the site, it was proposed to plant a mixed herbal ley under the solar array, in compliance with the revised plan.
- There were no planning reasons why this application should be refused.



Councillor Hunt asked how many households, for example, would this scheme power. Dr Smith responded between 6-8 dwellings. In response to a question raised by Cllr Trapp, Dr Smith answered the scheme also involved a heat pump.

Councillor Brown stated he was in support of the application. Councillor Harries thought this was exactly the sort of institute the district should have and thought the application should go ahead. It was therefore duly proposed by Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Jones, and when put to the vote, approved.

It was resolved:

That planning application reference 20/01145/FUL be APPROVED, subject to the conditions listed in the report with the following amendments (as set out in the committee update), as amended due to the developer's revised plan,:

- Condition 1 to include the updated plan;
- Condition 3 (hard landscaping) was not now required;
- Condition 4 was revised as the wording "Notwithstanding the approved plans" was not now required.

**61. 20/01069/FUL – 72B WEST STREET, ISLEHAM**

Rachael Forbes, Planning Officer, presented a report (reference V122, previously circulated) for an application for the construction of a four bedroom two storey detached dwelling and garage/games room/gymnasium.

The Planning Officer advised the Committee that the main considerations in the determination of this application were: principle of development, visual amenity, residential amenity, highway safety and parking, ecology and trees, flood risk and drain age, and other matters.

Principle of Development

The site was located within the development envelope, so the principle of development was acceptable.

Visual Amenity

The application was for a dwelling that was similar in scale to one approved for Plot 2 and was the same scale as Plot 1. It also had similar details to nearby dwellings and was in keeping with the area. There would be limited views of the garage. There would be no impact on visual amenity.

Residential Amenity

There would be sufficient distances between the new dwelling and nearby dwellings so there would be no significant impact on residential amenity.



### Highway Safety and Parking

Access to the site had previously been approved, and had been constructed, and there would be no more intensification of access caused by the new building. Sufficient space for parking and turning would also be provided.

### Other Matters

The site would be unsustainable for protected species, so biodiversity enhancements could be achieved via suitable conditions. There were no objections regarding the trees on site, as matters had not significantly changed since the report in 2018. The site was at low risk of flooding or contamination. An archaeological programme had already been completed.

Therefore, the application was recommended for approval.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Democratic Services Officer read out a statement on behalf of Mr T Drayton, the Applicant. It stated:

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement regarding this planning application. I have been employed as the builder and consultant for the recent build of 72A West Street, Isleham, which is now complete and I have been given the opportunity to purchase the land for 72B. I am a local builder, employing local tradesmen (who are predominantly from the village of Isleham).

The main reason for wanting to buy this land and build this new dwelling, is for myself, my wife and my 3 young sons. We would be building this for ourselves to have as our family home. This is not a property we wish to build and sell on. Unfortunately, we can not find a property that meets all of our needs.

Our children are very settled in the local school, and I run a local youth football team in the village, so staying local is priority for my family.

This property would give my children space to grow, to have a great amount of outdoor space but more importantly, it will ensure us the space should/when my wife's condition deteriorates. Unfortunately she suffers from the degenerative neurological condition of multiple sclerosis.

After reviewing the plans for the previously approved dwelling on this site, I've needed to adjust the floorplan of the dwelling to have future disability at the forefront of my mind. However, I have not adjusted the floor area of the garage that was previously approved.

We do hope that you approve our application.

Councillor Trapp wondered whether the plan for the house had been changed for easier access. The Planning Officer confirmed to Members that the scale of the development had not changed significantly from the previous approval.

The recommendation for approval was duly proposed by Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Ambrose Smith and when put to the vote it was declared approved.

It was resolved:

That planning application reference 20/01069/FUL be APPROVED subject to the recommended conditions in the officer's report.



62. **PLANNING PERFORMANCE REPORT – OCTOBER 2020**

Rebecca Saunt, Planning Manager, presented a report (reference V123, previously circulated) which outlined the performance of the Planning Department for October 2020.

The Planning Manager confirmed that the Appeal Hearing for the McCann case would be a virtual hearing instead of written representations. Two planning appeals that had been approved by the Planning Inspectorate had been challenged by the Council. They had been taken to the High Court and had been quashed. The Inspectorate would now have to re-determine those appeals. A table had been included in the report to show the numbers and types of Enforcement complaints received during the month.

It was resolved:

That the Planning Performance Report for October 2020 be noted.

The meeting closed at 3:35pm.