

**Minutes from the Foxton Parish Council Planning Committee meeting
Wednesday 29th September 2021 at Foxton Village Hall**

Present: Caroline Ilott, Peter Howell, and Sheryl Williamson of the Planning Committee, Parish Councillors Peter Tye and Simon Buggey. 8 members of the public including District Cllr Deborah Roberts and Mr Chris Anderson, the agent for the applicant of the Folwmere Road site. The meeting was quorate.

Andy Brown gave apologies for absence.

1. Declarations of interest – none.

2. Minutes of Planning item on the agenda of the FPC meeting on Monday 6th September 2021 and matters arising

The minutes were taken as a true record of the meeting with no matters arising.

3. Planning Applications to be considered

A) Ref. No: 21/03944/FUL

Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 3 dwellings with associated infrastructure. (Re-submission of 21/02423/FUL)

32 Fowlmere Road, Foxton, Cambs, CB22 6RT

The Residents who attended the meeting had questions and observations for Mr Anderson, the applicants agent. Mr Anderson was asked to listen to the residents and Parish Council views and take them back to his client. The overall opinion was to refuse the application in its current form but to agree that the site in question should have some development.

The Parish Council formal response is as follows:

Foxton Parish Council is not against development of this site in principal but recommends refusal for this application and requests that it go to SCDC Planning Committee if the officer is minded to recommend approval. We also request that the SCDC Planning Committee make a site visit.

Refusal is recommended for the following reasons:

i) The 3 dwellings detailed constitute over-development of the area in terms of the size of the individual building footprints. They are 3 large buildings with very little amenity space allocated for each dwelling in comparison to the size of the dwellings, access issues, and no internal safe pedestrian and disabled access.

ii) Foxton Neighbourhood Plan, which was made on 5th August 2021 and its policies must be taken into consideration. The housing mix within new residential development schemes should be suitable for meeting the needs within the parish, as set out in the Housing Needs Survey.

Policy Fox10 in the Plan states: 'The mix of market homes on sites of 9 or fewer units will provide at least 50% of 1-2 bedroom units to take into account Foxton's identified need for smaller homes for both first-time buyers and older people downsizing.'

'In homes intended for the lifetime occupation by the older generation, conformity to Building Regulations Standards M4(2) is encouraged.'

The designs and layouts of Plots 2 and 3 have hardly changed from the original application. No sizing difference, apart from a slight roof height reduction, and only small changes to Plot 2 plus solar panel indications. 1 electrical charging point for each of the 3 plots and bicycle storage has also been added.

The existing structure on the plot is a bungalow and housing of this nature would be far more appropriate and acceptable, or properly designed units of 1 or 2 bedrooms which would match the Foxton housing needs as detailed in the Neighbourhood Plan 2017 AECOM Housing Needs Assessment and the 2018 whole village consultation. Properties of 3 to 4 rooms IN TOTAL are needed to provide downsizing provision for many older residents who want to stay in Foxton but have properties which are too large to adequately manage. These smaller properties could also be more affordable for younger residents who wish to live independently.

In the Planning Statement for this application, it is stated that Policy Fox2 Sustainable Design and Construction has been 'fully integrated within these proposals to a very high standard'. This can be challenged in that no major building design alternatives have been offered which differ significantly from the previous application and only token service has been paid to solar power, electrical charging points and bike storage.

The only attempt to satisfy Fox10/ Housing Mix policy is by changing Plot 1 from a 3 to a 2 bedroom dwelling. The plans for Plot 1 have been modified from the withdrawn application to show a reduction from 3 bedrooms to 2 with the ground floor bedroom being changed to a home office/snug. No attempt has been made to modify the

overall size or layout of this plot and the ensuite bathroom has only been modified to show an internal wall and door not connecting with the ground floor bathroom/wash room. This is a feature that can easily be changed after the build is completed, to return to a 3 bedroom property.

iii) The removal of the existing mature boundary vegetation around the whole plot will have significant visual impact from many of the neighbouring 2 storey houses in Illingworth Way, St Laurence Road and Fowlmere Road. This has been highlighted by 7 of the 14 properties on the Neighbours Notified list. Many mature trees and shrubs will be lost and risk of loss to mature neighbouring property trees from cutting back could be an issue. Some mature healthy trees which are not on the site but are very close to the boundaries could suffer long term root damage from construction of the properties –something that will not become apparent until long after the developer has sold the properties. There are no TPO's on the site but the surrounding residents have a right to have a degree of protection on this matter. Tree work on or near neighbouring properties will affect drainage of surface water, as new planting will take a number of years to take up an equal absorption. This could have effect in the run off of surface water. Any work effecting neighbouring properties 'mature trees could result in ground 'heave' and could have effects on their building foundations.

iv) The design of the application dwellings is not compatible with the location in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, and materials in relation to the surrounding area. The overall design is mainly urban. The tall chimneys are a particular example of incongruous design. There are many blank walls and the overall designs do not reflect the surrounding vernacular. The 'packed in' nature of the buildings layout could make it problematic for building eg. scaffolding erection with a very small space between the boundary fencing and the proposed plots 2 and 3. There is a distinct lack of space for safe off road storage of building material, deliveries and general parking.

There is no report from the police about the crime prevention aspects of the site layout.

v) Specific plot issues -

a) Plot 1 - This effect properties at 2 Illingworth Way and 30, 37 and 39 Fowlmere Road. There are issues of sun and daylight blocking plus privacy and overlooking with No 30 along with the fact that cars will be parked virtually outside the living room window of No 30.

No 39 will have overlooking and privacy issues as the upper floor windows of that property face the upper floor windows of Plot 1 bedroom and living room.

No 2 Illingworth Way will overlook the plot with the same issues for Plot 3.

Overall the fenestration is very small and the north elevation in particular has very little window space. The rooms are cramped and contrived in design and the overall dwelling is very close to No 30 Fowlmere Road.

b) Plot 2 - This affects properties at 41 and 39 St Laurence Road and 20 Illingworth Way in particular. The St Laurence Road properties can overlook plot 2 and 3 gardens raising privacy issues from their upper floor windows. The bedroom of the property on Plot 1 will look into the bedrooms of the properties of Plots 2 and 3.

c) Plot 3 - This affects properties 2,4,6, and 30 Illingworth Way in particular with overlooking issues both from and to Plot 3 dwelling. Again very few windows on north and south elevations for the size of the building and overall cramped and contrived design. Plot 3 is also very close to Plot 2.

vi) Access:

The proposed access road into the site is directly opposite No 39 Fowlmere Road which has a sloping drive and parking for 2 vehicles. This could cause safety issues for vehicles ingress and egress from both No 39 and the new site road.

The proposed access road is sited on one of the narrowest sections of Fowlmere Road and this, linked with the car parking outside properties on Fowlmere Road could also have safety issues.

There is no pavement fronting No 32 Fowlmere Road, which is not made clear on the plans. Thus there is no safe pedestrian access on that side of Fowlmere Road and there are no details of any pedestrian or disabled access on the site road entrance.

The visibility splay on the south side is not within the site boundary (as shown on the plans). This piece of verge belongs to Cambs County Council Highways. There is also a lamp post situated on the edge of the proposed site entrance -again not shown on the plans -and a drainage gully in the road. The proposal of having a height limited boundary fence on the southern access road side kept free of obstruction does not address the matter of who is to be responsible for this condition and does not mitigate the other ingress and egress safety issues.

The proposed access is very close to the junction of Illingworth Way and Fowlmere Road.

The narrow pinch point of the access road of 3.7m down from 5m could cause

difficulty for refuse lorries and for emergency services.

The rear garden wall of Plot 1 is low scale up to the point where it bends and after the height is not specified. This could affect road visibility.

There is a considerable amount of parking on Fowlmere Road as there are no parking restrictions. The public highway outside the proposed access is on a gradient which can encourage vehicles coming into Foxton to speed up. There is an hourly bus service plus the usual HGV and farm vehicles plus more and more vehicles using this road as a 'rat run' to avoid the Foxton level crossing closures. A site of 2 x 4 bed and 1 x 2 bed houses will inevitably bring visitor parking. Large delivery vehicles could have problems with the current ingress and egress of the site. The proposed access is directly opposite a steeply sloping private drive. All this combines to potentially cause traffic problems and 'an accident waiting to happen'.

We would ask that the Highways department, who are currently investigating a legal issue over a piece of 'no-man's land' bordering on the road frontage of 2 Illingworth Way and Fowlmere Road, reconsider their opinions of the overall safety aspects of this access and the visibility splays up and down the Fowlmere Road in particular.

vii) The soft landscaping plan is markedly different from the site plan of the southern boundary. The AIA assessments do not seem to add up and this has given rise to comments from neighbours consulted. 21 trees are scheduled to be removed which could be mitigated with better layouts and design.

The Soft landscaping plan has not changed from withdrawn application. There is no renewed ecological survey and assessment with the new application.

Comments on the removal of a mature tree in the bird nesting season should be noted. A mature tree which was removed was not included in the AIA despite there being 2 photos with the mature tree visible in the appendix. The site was purchased on 12th February 2021 and the tree in question cut down by 31st March 2021.

There is a large proportion of hard landscaping within the site, which could also be mitigated with more thoughtful design. Although this may be of a permeable nature, climate change matters and more frequent extreme weather conditions should be considered when so much soil sealing is contemplated.

The Waste Management officer has made a point regarding air source heat pumps located outside properties that may require noise reduction methods. The cramped nature of the site would suggest that this could be an issue not just for residents of the new dwellings but for surrounding properties.

If this application goes ahead in its current form, there will be a significant reduction in the quality of life for the surrounding residents in Fowlmere Road, Illingworth Way and St Laurence Road who will all, to some degree, have privacy and overlooking issues with all the proposed plots. The same will be true for the purchasers of these properties as they will be in a 'goldfish bowl', being overlooked in turn.

The site should be developed but not in this way. The 8 neighbour objections give more details on this matter and should be carefully considered.

5 members of the public left the meeting.

B) Ref: 21/03946/FUL

Provision of 7 No. dwellings involving the retention and conversion of the existing chapel to form one dwelling, part retention and conversion of existing school buildings to provide 2 dwellings and the provision of 4 new build dwellings following demolition of some existing buildings. The proposal also includes extensions and alterations and the existing access to the site will be amended.

Trinity School, 8 Station Road, Foxton, CB22 6SA

Discussion of this application agreed that the application must be refused in its current form as it does not comply with a key policy of the Neighbourhood Plan. It was proposed and agreed that contact should be made with the applicant, This Land Ltd, via Peter McDonald, our County Councillor, as This Land Ltd are a wholly owned independent subsidiary of Cambs County Council. Foxton Parish Council would like to discuss the application.

Foxton Parish Council response to the current application is as follows:

Foxton Parish Council wishes to object to this application. If officers are minded to approve we request that this application goes to the SCDC Planning Committee for consideration. We would also request that the SCDC Planning Committee make a site visit.

There is no objection to the development of this site per se and indeed the housing requirements are detailed in the Foxton Neighbourhood Plan under FOX/9 Policy. The Neighbourhood Plan was made on 5th August 2021 and should form part of the case officer's deliberations on this application. FOX/9 Policy is as follows:

Redevelopment of old school/chapel site on Station Road

'Development proposals for the old Trinity School and Methodist Chapel site in Station Road (as identified on Figure 22 and the Policies Map, Figure 30B) for up to 6 dwellings arising from the conversion of existing buildings and erection of new units will be supported provided that:

- at least 50% of dwellings are smaller one/two*

bedroom dwellings suitable for older people wishing to downsize; and • the design and layout of the buildings and conversions respects the site's location in the Conservation Area and the buildings' status as Buildings of Local Merit (non-designated heritage asset)/ Positive buildings. Dwellings designed and built to the "accessible and adaptable M4(2) standard", where possible, will be encouraged.'

The application is for 7 housing units in total, not 6, as stipulated in FOX/9 Policy. This is a clear infringement of this core policy. Therefore this application should be rejected. The applicant states that the supporting text at 6.8 states 'around 6 dwellings, but the actual policy is very clear stating 'up to 6....'

This policy was based on the results of 2 rounds of separate consultation with residents of Foxtton in 2018 and 2019 showed the main need for housing to be for older people wishing to downsize but stay in the village and starter homes for young people. The type of housing would be 1 or 2 bedroom properties and bungalows. FOX10 Housing Mix shows this as follows:

Policy FOX/10 Housing Mix

'Housing mix within new residential development schemes shall be suitable for meeting the needs within the parish, as set out in the Housing Needs Survey. The mix of market homes on sites of 9 or fewer units will provide at least 50% of 1-2 bedroom units to take into account Foxttons identified need for smaller homes for both first-time buyers and older people downsizing. In homes intended for the lifetime occupation by the older generation, conformity to Building Regulations Standards M4(2) is encouraged.'

Plots 5 and 6 are very small at approx. 50sqm. This could have a detrimental impact on the internal circulation space for users of mobility aids and the doors may not be of wheelchair access width.

If the terrace was changed to 3 units, then the properties could be bigger to allow better internal circulation with possible added landscaping to the far corner to create a better balance of design.

This site is in a key central location of Foxtton, in the heart of the village and close to the shop/post office, White Horse pub and church. There is a bus stop opposite the entrance to the site and Foxtton railway station is within a short walking distance. This makes it a prime site for older people. The site is located in the Foxtton Conservation Area and is in close proximity to a number of Grade II listed buildings including 18 Station Road, 22 Station Road, the Bury and the Barn at Number 59 High Street. This last building (the Bury is an immediate neighbour of the Trinity School site.

The design and layout, incorporating part of the old school building is mainly sympathetic to the character and built form of the surrounding Conservation Area as are the colour palette and building materials. The height of the overall roof line should not, however, be taller than the existing roof line.

The large glass element of the north- west elevation of the chapel entrance is not in keeping with the outline of the chapel 'building of merit'. The same is true for the 3 oriel windows of Plots 1,2 and 3 on the south east elevations. There are no similar windows in the surrounding Conservation area.

The north east elevation of Plots 1 to 6 has very urban hedging – again not in keeping with the area when viewed in conjunction with the hard landscaping of the access road.

The design of the bin stores makes them too high –why do they need formal tiled rooves? The height of these stores situated right on the site boundary could cause unnecessary overshadowing of the neighbouring gardens.

The landscape proposals show two area of 'informal landscape'. It looks like grass plus a few trees but the ecology report mentions using native species in the soft landscaping. These two areas are very small and could soon become unkempt unless included in the private management arrangements of the development.

The site visit in the ecology report took place in mid -winter 2018, so the cowslips that grow abundantly in the grass strip at the front of the site where the 2 cherry trees are located, would have been missed. These plants could be transferred into the site and the biodiversity gain/landscaping increased. It is wrong to suggest that there is negligible ecological importance in the site as it has been uninhabited for a number of years. Any potential bird and insect habitats must therefore be put in the right place for the stated species to have any chance of success.

All the trees in the Conservation Area must have permission for any work proposed. There is a reference to trees moderating heat but none are incorporated in the right places in the layout to achieve this function. The tree T3, which is in the pub car park and not part of the site, is very large and could cause significant overshadowing of the gardens and properties of Plots 4, 5 and possibly 6.

Any biodiversity offset via S106 should be for the benefit of Foxton.

The road markings for the Trinity School are still clearly visible. There should be a condition to have these removed by the developer.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm