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F/YR23/0993/O

**Applicant: Mr & Mrs Cutteridge**

**Agent : Mr Ian Gowler  
Gowler Architectural**

**Land South West Of The Hollies, Hospital Road, Doddington, Cambridgeshire**

**Erect up to 3 x dwellings (outline application with all matters reserved) and associated highway improvement works.**

**Officer recommendation: Refuse**

**Reason for Committee: Number of representations contrary to Officer recommendation**

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## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The application seeks outline planning permission for 3 dwellings with all matters reserved, though access is indicated from Hospital Road.
- 1.2. Application F/YR23/0310/O was withdrawn in June 2023. The application is identical to that submitted previously save for an updated plan presenting 'highway improvement' works that show on the annotation to 'include road widening as per engineers details'.
- 1.3. The site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary and therefore is classed as 'Elsewhere Development.' It is considered that the development will result in material harm to the character and appearance of the area. The limited benefits derived through the erection of a further three dwellings are not considered sufficient enough to outweigh this harm, particularly given the location of the dwellings in relation to local services which will likely result in a primary reliance on private motor vehicles contrary to the transport aims of the Local Plan and the NPPF.
- 1.4. With regard to location, the proposal fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, the pattern and character of the natural landscape and built development at this location and would appear incongruous to both the rural character of the immediate area creating an adverse visual on the surroundings and particularly users of the public footpath network in the area. The development would necessitate removal of some of the continuous hedgerow to the east of the application site which would add to the urbanising effect and visual impacts of the proposal.
- 1.5. The proposal is considered to constitute unsustainable development due to an unacceptable harm to the character of the area and the introduction of dwellings in an unsustainably linked area having regard to the development plan when taken as a whole. Likewise, the development is considered to conflict with the design and overall sustainability aims as set out in the NPPF.
- 1.6. Hospital Road in its current form lacks provision for passing vehicles and is absent of any pedestrian provision. As such, there is increased risk due to the intensification of vehicles needing to reverse excessive distances and there is also increased likelihood of pedestrians walking in the carriageway where they are at risk of conflict with motorised traffic. It is to be noted that application 23/0070/O was overturned at committee for the erection of up to 5 no dwellings on the opposite side of Hospital Road to the application site. As part of the approved scheme, and submitted by the same applicant, the application proposed highway improvement works which have

been conditioned appropriately with more specific details to be submitted with any subsequent reserved matters application that may come forward. The works proposed include the increase of highway width and the provision of a footpath.

1.7. During the course of this application, an updated plan was submitted which was annotated to show 'highway improvement works' for this scheme should the site approved not be brought forward. Other than for the plan stating 'includes road widening as per engineers details,' no other details were referenced, therefore is ambiguous and lacks sufficiently clear detail to set out what works are proposed, Further to this, the visibility splays indicated are insufficient for the speed limit with no justification provided to support the reduced splays.

1.8. Consequently, the recommendation is to refuse the application.

## **2 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1. The application site is a large, mostly flat rectangular parcel of land, approximately 3695 sqm, located on the western side of Hospital Road. The site lies in the countryside and is currently used as a field. There is hedgerow along its eastern boundary where it borders Hospital Road. The site lies within flood zone 1.
- 2.2. The site can only be accessed via Hospital Road which is a single-track road with no footways running north off Benwick Road. Hospital Road provides an emergency access to the hospital and car park and also the residential development including the dwelling Norbrown to the north of the hospital and to the east of Hospital Road and the four new dwellings that have recently been permitted between Norbrown and the Hospital (see history below). Hospital Road continues for some distance and serves a few sporadic dwellings and farms and also other sporadic business including the Megaplants Garden Centre and, opposite this, a former poultry farm which is used for storage purposes.

## **3 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1. This application is an outline application proposing the erection of 3no dwellings on the site.
- 3.2. An indicative plan shows that each of the three plots would have its own access point to Hospital Road, located at the south of each parcel. It is noted that this application is for outline permission only, with all matters reserved, so the access location is not confirmed by these indicative drawings.
- 3.3. Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:

[F/YR23/0993/O | Erect up to 3 x dwellings \(outline application with all matters reserved\) | Land South West Of The Hollies Hospital Road Doddington Cambridgeshire \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://fenland.gov.uk/F/YR23/0993/O)

## **4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1. F/YR23/0310/O was submitted in April 2023 in outline form with all matters reserved for 3no dwellings on the same site. This was subsequently withdrawn in June 2023. Decisions in the vicinity of the site will be addressed in the Background section later in the report.

## **5 CONSULTATIONS**

### **5.1. Doddington Parish Council**

Objects for the following reasons;

*Doddington Parish Council considered the above planning application at its meeting on Wednesday evening and voted to object to the application on the following grounds.*

*The proposed development which is shown on the indicative proposed block plan is accessed from the west of Hospital Road and shows three additional access points from each of the three proposed plots onto Hospital Road. The proposed development would lead to unsafe highway and access conditions onto Hospital Road due to its narrow single tracked nature with a lack of any formal passing spaces, street lighting or footpaths. Hospital Road also acts as an emergency access from the Hospital.*

*This site would be on open countryside for the purposes of applying planning policy and there is no overriding need for the development to take place given the District Council's housing land supply position. The application would have a detrimental effect on the character and visual amenity of the area. The application site includes a substantial amount of trees and hedges along Hospital Road. In order to provide vehicular access with associated visibility into the proposed development site, the vast majority of the trees and hedges would need to be removed which would have a significant adverse impact upon the character of the area.*

*The Parish Council noted that the indicative proposed block plan used in this application is the same plan that was used in application F/YR23/0310/O. That application was withdrawn by the agent immediately before the application was due to be heard by the Planning Committee on 28th June 2023. That application had a officer recommendation to refuse planning permission as amongst other reasons both the Highways Authority and the Ecology Officer recommended refusal. The Parish Council therefore trust that this application will be refused.*

## **5.2. Local Highway Authority (9/1/24)**

*In order to make an informed decision in respect of the submitted application, additional information is required:*

*Doddington Road is subject to the national speed limit, meaning vehicle speeds up to 60mph are permissible. In order to ensure that safe access can be achieved the applicant will need to demonstrate that an inter-vehicular visibility splay of 2.4m x 215m is achievable from at least one location along the site frontage. The visibility splay must be contained within the application boundary and / or the highway boundary, a verified copy of which can be obtained by following the instructions at the link below.*

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/highway-searches>

*Based on the nature of Hospital Road, I will accept a reduction in visibility commensurate with the observed 85th percentile speeds. Irrespective of the above point, Hospital Road is narrow with limited opportunity for vehicle passing.*

*To mitigate the highway safety impact of this development, the carriageway should be widened to 5m for at least a length of 10m along the site frontage to allow for vehicle passing. Such works would need to be implemented prior to first occupation. I am content that this could be resolved by condition, should the LPA and applicant be in agreement. I would also highlight to the LPA that a lack of footway provision along Hospital Road could undermine the sustainable credentials of the site as it would require future residents to walk in the carriageway. While this is not unusual in rural areas, it is not conducive with a safe / attractive pedestrian environment. Lastly, I recommend that the LPA consider this proposal in light of the nearby consent F/YR23/0070/O and its associated highway mitigation requirements. Should all parties be willing there is opportunity for a wholistic highway mitigation package which would satisfy the requirements of both sites, for which implementation costs could be shared. If the applicant is unwilling or unable to amend the application or provide additional information as outlined above, please advise me so I may consider making further recommendations, possibly of refusal.*

### **Local Highway Authority (8/2/24)**

*The latest submission demonstrates that the site is capable of achieving 2.4m x 43m visibility splays which is appropriate for 30mph speeds. I note that the applicant is indicating that they will re-position the 30mph beyond their site, but this can only be permitted with a Speed Limit Order. Such Orders are governed by legislation which sits outside of the planning system so should the application be reliant upon it the Order will need to be granted prior to determination of the planning application. The other comments in my response dated 9th January 2024 remain valid.*

### **Local Highway Authority (1/11/24)**

*The Local Highway Authority's comments dated 9<sup>th</sup> January remain unchanged.*

*The splay requirement for this road is 2.4m x 215m. The splays shown are 190m to the north and 97m to the south. However, no evidence or justification has been provided to support those reduced splays.*

*The splays should be set back 2.4m from the carriageway/kerb line. Further information on inter-vehicle visibility splays can be found within our General Principles for Development document [Highways Development Management General Principles for Development- January 2023 - Amended](#)*

*Additionally, the Highway Works inset within drawing 319-100 D is ambiguous and lacks sufficiently clear detail to set out what works are proposed.*

### **5.3. Environmental Health Officer**

*The Environmental Health Team note and accept the submitted information and have 'No Objections' to the proposal, as it is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality, the noise climate, or be affected by ground contamination.*

### **5.4. Ecology Officer**

*The proposal is acceptable on ecology grounds. The scheme will require removal of some vegetation that could support breeding birds (scrub / trees) and potentially ground nesting birds (arable / grassland field). Therefore if permission is granted, we recommend the following informative be attached to the planning decision.*

#### **SUGGESTED DRAFT INFORMATIVE – Nesting Birds**

*The Applicant is reminded that under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (section 1), it is an offence to remove, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built. Planning consent for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. Trees and scrub are likely to contain nesting birds between 1st March and 31st August inclusive. While agricultural fields, or recently cleared fields (bare ground), can support ground nesting birds, such as skylark. These habitats are present on the application site and are to be assumed to contain nesting birds between the above dates, unless a recent survey has been undertaken by a competent ecologist to assess the nesting bird activity on site during this period and has shown it is absolutely certain that nesting birds are not present*

*Reason – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (protection of wild birds, their nests, eggs and young)*

### **5.5. Local Residents/Interested Parties**

*Four objections from within Doddington:*

- No attempt has been made to overcome the previous four reasons for refusal that were due to be presented at committee before it was withdrawn
- Impact upon the character of the area
- There is also no evidence of the need for further housing within the village. Indeed the District Council purports to have a healthy land supply of future housing (6.69 years' worth of supply against a requirement for 5 years).
- Failure to comply with Policy LP12
- Survey results in March 2023 from the 'Doddington Neighbourhood Plan Group' concluded that 71% of respondents were concerned about traffic, too many houses, lack of public transport & infrastructure.
- Ecological impacts
- Highway safety issues
- In order to have this passed we are of the understanding that the applicant has put forward a proposal to widen the road and add a new footpath including at the Benwick Road end of Hospital Road. This would NOT be feasible. This would require land belonging to a third party.
- When considered cumulatively with approved and current planning applications within the applicants ownership on Hospital Road this proposal exceeds the ten dwelling threshold for planning obligations and therefore engages Local Plan Policy LP5 Part B. This has not been considered within the planning application.
- Relationship with Approved Stables/Hay Store - The proposal does not consider the relationship of the proposal with the stables/hay store approved under application F/YR23/0251/F which would introduce concerns in respect of odour and noise and disturbance given the juxtaposition.
- Should planning permission be granted for this application, then the irrationality of the decision would be brought to the attention of the Courts

*Eight letters of support. Six from Doddington and two from Chatteris:*

- In support on the understanding that road improvements are made to Hospital Road to support the increase in houses and traffic
- Provide family homes for the village
- Proposal will not adversely affect the character of the area
- Good location close to village centre

Re-notification took place on 12/9/24 following an updated plan showing 'highways improvement works'. This has resulted in one letter of support and one letter of objection.

The letter of support solely related to the widening of Hospital Road which will not only improve safety for highway users but also pedestrians.

The objection relates to the plan being unclear in terms of what works are proposed to Hospital Road. The plan has no key and doesn't state any trees/hedges to be removed to facilitate any highway improvement works. This will have adverse biodiversity issues following removal of vegetation/trees. Are there any street lights planned?

## **6 STATUTORY DUTY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014).

## **7 POLICY FRAMEWORK**

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**  
**National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**  
**National Design Guide 2021**

### **Fenland Local Plan 2014**

LP1 – A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents  
LP3 – Spatial Strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside  
LP4 – Housing  
LP5 – Meeting Housing Need  
LP12 – Rural Areas Development Policy  
LP13 – Supporting and Managing the Impact of a Growing District  
LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland  
LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland  
LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District  
LP19 – The Natural Environment

### **Emerging Local Plan**

The Draft Fenland Local Plan (2022) was published for consultation between 25th August 2022 and 19 October 2022, all comments received will be reviewed and any changes arising from the consultation will be made to the draft Local Plan. Given the very early stage which the Plan is therefore at, it is considered, in accordance with Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, that the policies of this should carry extremely limited weight in decision making. Of relevance to this application are policies:

LP1: Settlement Hierarchy  
LP2: Spatial Strategy for the location of residential development  
LP4: Securing Fenland's Future  
LP5: Health and Wellbeing  
LP7: Design  
LP8: Amenity Provision  
LP12: Meeting Housing Needs  
LP18: Development in the Countryside  
LP20: Accessibility and Transport  
LP22: Parking Provision  
LP24: Natural Environment  
LP25: Biodiversity Net Gain  
LP27: Trees and Planting  
LP28: Landscape  
LP32: Flood and Water Management  
LP33: Development of Land Affected by Contamination

## **8 KEY ISSUES**

- **Principle of Development**

- **Design and Visual Amenity**
- **Residential Amenity**
- **Highways/parking**
- **Biodiversity**

## **9 BACKGROUND**

- 9.1. There are a number of recent decisions relating to development in the vicinity of the site.
- 9.2. An initial application for two dwellings on the eastern side of Hospital Road (F/YR19/0667/O) was refused on the basis that the proposed development was contrary to Policies LP3 and LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 and would be at odds with the dispersed nature of the development along Hospital Road. This would have an urbanising effect on the rural site to the detriment to the character of the area. Subsequent application F/YR20/0182/O, also for two dwellings on the same site, which made no attempt to address the reasons for refusal, was granted by Planning Committee contrary to officer recommendation and plot 1 of this scheme has been completed.
- 9.3. Application, F/YR21/1522/O, was granted by Planning Committee, contrary to officer recommendation for two more dwellings located behind the frontage plots on the eastern side of Hospital Road approved by F/YR20/0182/O. eastern side of Hospital Road.
- 9.4. Planning permission has also been granted (ref: F/YR22/0032/F) for café/retail buildings at Megaplants, a garden centre served off Hospital Road with conditions requiring passing bays on Hospital Road. One of these passing bays appears to be within the red line of this current application, near the indicative access point shown for Plot 1.
- 9.5. Planning application F/YR22/0390/F for change of use of land to the north of 5 – 7 Askham Row (west of the subject site) for domestic purposes including erection of chicken run and pond was refused by Committee (in line with the officer recommendation) on 26th August 2022. This site is to the west of the current application site. The application was refused for the following reason;
- Policy LP12 Part A (c) and Policy LP16 (d) of the Fenland Local Plan 2014, DM3 (d) of the Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD 2014 and Paragraph 130 of the NPPF require that developments do not adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the open countryside. The development creates a significantly sized domestic garden which results in an urbanising encroachment into the open countryside to the significant detriment of the character and visual amenity of the area. As such, the development is contrary to the aforementioned policies.*
- 9.6. A PIP application F/YR22/1243/PIP for 3 dwellings was refused at committee on 5 April 2023. This site lies west of Hospital Road and directly adjoins the south of the application site. The application was refused due to a failure to recognise the intrinsic character of the countryside and pattern character of the natural landscape and lead to a significant loss of hedgerow. Further to this, it was considered the development would not make efficient use of the land.
- 9.7. Application F/YR23/0070/O was submitted in outline form with all matters reserved for up to 5 dwellings located to the east of the four approved dwellings, referenced above, on the eastern side of Hospital Road. The committee resolved to grant permission contrary to the Officers recommendation. Subsequent to the overturn at committee, it was brought to light that there was a land ownership issue raised in regard to the highway improvement works proposed. Communication then took place between the County Highways Records team and a third party. It has recently been concluded that given the evidence reviewed, County Highways feel, on balance, that they reached a reasoned conclusion on the width of the highway that does not unnecessarily impact

private land boundaries asserted by adjoining landowners and therefore highway mitigation works are deliverable. The decision has subsequently been issued following due processes.

- 9.8. Application F/YR23/0310/O for 3 dwellings was due to be taken to committee in June 2023 with a recommendation to refuse. The agent formally withdrew the application before the committee meeting.

## 10 ASSESSMENT

### Principle of Development

- 10.1. Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan identifies Doddington as a 'Growth Village' where development and new service provision either within the existing urban area or as a small extension will be appropriate. The application site, however, lies beyond the western side of Hospital Road and is outside of the settlement boundary and thus classed as 'Elsewhere' development. Within such areas, development is restricted to that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport or utility services; and to minerals or waste development in accordance with separate Minerals and Waste Local Development Documents (LDDs).'
- 10.2. Policy LP12 states, at Part A, that "*new development will be supported where it contributes towards the sustainability of that settlement and does not harm the wide-open character of the countryside*" and identifies the following criteria:
- (a) *The site is in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village; and*
  - (b) *It would not result in coalescence with any neighbouring village; and*
  - (c) *It would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and farmland*
  - (d) *The proposal is of a scale and in a location that is in keeping with the core shape and form of the settlement, and will not adversely harm its character and appearance; and*
  - (e) *It would not extend linear features of the settlement or result in ribbon development; and*
  - (f) *The site retains and respects natural boundaries such as trees, hedgerows, embankments and drainage ditches; and*
  - (g) *The site retains and respects ecological, heritage and biodiversity features; and*
  - (h) *It would not result in the loss of important open space within the village; and*
  - (i) *It would not result in the loss of high-grade agricultural land, or if so, comprehensive evidence is provided to justify the loss. This should include an assessment of all alternative reasonable opportunities in the locality to develop on lower grades of agricultural land; and*
  - (j) *It would not put people or property in danger from identified risks; and*
  - (k) *It can be served by sustainable infrastructure provision, such as surface water and wastewater drainage and highways.*
- 10.3. The developed footprint referred to in criteria (a) of Policy LP12 is further defined in a footnote as "*the continuous built form of the settlement and excludes:*
- (a) *individual buildings and groups of dispersed or intermittent buildings, that are clearly detached from the continuous built-up area of the settlement*
  - (b) *gardens, paddocks, and other undeveloped land within the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement where the land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built-up area of the settlement*
  - (c) *agricultural buildings and associated land on the edge of the settlement*
  - (d) *outdoor sports and recreation facilities and other formal open spaces on the edge of the settlement"*
- 10.4. The site is surrounded by open agricultural land to the south and west, and, adjoins open agricultural land and a paddock to the north. The site itself is a non-uniform parcel



taken from a larger plot of agricultural land. Given criterion b) of the footnote, it is considered that the site does not therefore adjoin the continuous built form of the settlement and is not therefore *“in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village”*. Consequently, it does not therefore comply with Policy LP12 Part A(a).

- 10.5. Policy LP12 Part A (criteria c and d) require development to be in keeping with the character of its surroundings. The application site lies on one of the radial routes extending out from the built-up part of the village. In this area, development is more sporadic, is interspersed with open land and is largely frontage ribbon development. This presently remains the character of the area despite development such as Askham Row and the recent back land development close to Norbrown being permitted. The site is an agricultural field and has the appearance of being part of the countryside more than being part of the built-up area. The prevailing character of this area remains open countryside, and the introduction of new dwellings to this site would not be in keeping with the existing form of settlement, and would materially impact the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. The location and shape of the proposed site will create a development that is inconsistent and out of character with the surroundings. The subject site does not adjoin any other settlement area or built form and removes the site from the larger agricultural paddock in which it currently exists.
- 10.6. The four dwellings permitted between the rear of the hospital and Norbrown to the east of Hospital Road, which were approved by Committee contrary to recommendation, at least in part infill the gap between the hospital and Norbrown but they do not relate to and should not set a precedent to develop the current site which is part of a much larger field to the west of Hospital Road. This proposal, if permitted would be inorganic; is a contrived rectangular shape and would see erosion of the open countryside. It will visually encroach into an area of land which would likely set a precedent for remainder of this larger field to come forward in other small sites until the area is infilled.
- 10.7. In addition to the reasons set out above, the indicative block plan shows three separate, individual access points where presently a substantial hedgerow and number of trees are situated along the eastern boundary. Aside from the loss of the hedgerow in terms of biodiversity, vehicular accesses here will further diminish the character of Hospital Road by creation of further incremental urbanising development. As such the proposal is also contrary to policies (c) and (f) of LP12 A.
- 10.8. As the site does not satisfy the policies set out in LP12 Part A, it must be considered an ‘elsewhere’ location for the purposes of the settlement hierarchy set out in policy LP3. In such locations, development is restricted to that demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport, utility services or minerals and waste development. The proposal is not for a development that meets these restrictions.
- 10.9. Furthermore, NPPF paragraph 82 (2023) sets out that ‘in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.’ Such evidence may be a functional need e.g. agriculture, or for example a rural exception site to bring forward affordable housing. This application seeks permission for three market dwellings. No specific evidence has been provided as to why there is a need for housing in this particular area.
- 10.10. NPPF paragraph 83 sets out that ‘to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.’ The proposed development would be accessed by Hospital Road, which is currently devoid of a footway and street lighting. It is therefore an unattractive walking route, particularly in hours of darkness or inclement weather. As such, the dwellings will likely be over-reliant on private car use.
- 10.11. Policy LP16 of the Local Plan requires that high quality environments will be delivered and protected throughout the district and proposal for all new development will only be permitted where the relevant criteria set out in the policy are met. This includes criteria

(c) which requires retention of natural features such as trees, hedges, field patterns, drains and water bodies to be retained and incorporated into proposals and criteria (d) which requires proposals to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and the character of the area, enhancing its local setting and responding to and improving the character of the local built environment. It should reinforce local identity and not adversely impact either in design or scale terms on the street scene, settlement pattern or the landscape character of the surrounding area.

- 10.12. The proposal does not respect the pattern of development in the area and comprises an arbitrary rectangular piece of a larger field. It will further erode from the local identity of sporadic development which characterises the interface between the rural and village setting. As such the location of the proposal does not comply with Policy LP16 A, (c) and (d).
- 10.13. There is no demonstrated need for additional market housing in this location. The Council can currently demonstrate more than a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Fenland Local Plan remains up to date and is not at odds with the relevant policies of the NPPF. The tilted balance does not therefore apply. The application is clearly contrary to the development plan in terms of location as it is contrary to policies LP3, LP12 (a), (c), (d) and (f) and LP16 (c) and (d) as well as paragraphs 135 and 180 of the NPPF.
- 10.14. With regard to detailed matters such as design of the access and dwellings, biodiversity net gain and likely archaeological implications, if this Outline Planning Permission was approved, such matters would be dealt with at Reserved Matters stage, and, would require submission of detailed plans and reports.

### **Design and Visual Amenity**

- 10.15. Local Plan Policy LP16 identifies that proposals for new development will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the proposal:

*(c) retains and incorporates natural and historic features of the site such as trees, hedgerows, field patterns, drains and water bodies.*

*(d) makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area, enhances its local setting, responds to and improves the character of the local built environment, provides resilience to climate change, reinforces local identity and does not adversely impact, either in design or scale terms, on the street scene, settlement pattern or the landscape character of the surrounding area.*

- 10.16. Further, Policy DM3(d) of the 'Making a Positive Contribution to Local Distinctiveness and Character of the Area' SPD sets out that the character of the landscape, local built environment and settlement pattern should inform the layout, density, proportions, scale, orientation, materials and features of the proposed development, which should aim to improve and reinforce positive features of local identity. It is also a core planning principle in the NPPF that recognises the intrinsic value of the countryside therefore consideration needs to be given to any harm caused.
- 10.17. Whilst the application for planning permission is in outline form with all matters reserved, the Council must be satisfied that an appropriate design can be brought forward through any subsequent reserved matters application before granting planning permission.
- 10.18. The introduction of three dwellings in this location will create built development in what is currently open countryside. The proposal would lead to cumulative harm and urbanisation of the rural setting in the area.
- 10.19. The topography is relatively flat with visual screening on the eastern boundary of the site provided by the existing hedgerow. However, the remainder of the site and surroundings are open in nature with any additional built form considered to create a substantial degree of prominence in the wider landscape. Cumulatively, the extension beyond the

established pattern of development in conjunction with a substantial degree of prominence within the landscape would cause harmful erosion to the character and appearance of the open countryside.

- 10.20. Furthermore, as set out above, this proposal does not respect the pattern of development in the area and comprises an arbitrary rectangular piece of a larger field. It will also result in the loss of an existing continuous hedgerow for the future access points. The proposal would result piecemeal and incremental expansion of development into the countryside, and to approve such a scheme would set a precedent for additional piecemeal development; urbanisation and loss of openness with even more significant cumulative impacts.
- 10.21. The development is therefore contrary to Policy LP16 (c) and (d) of the Fenland Local Plan, DM3 of Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD.

### **Residential Amenity**

- 10.22. Policy LP2 states that development proposals should contribute to the Council's goal of Fenland's residents, inter alia, promoting high levels of residential amenity whilst policy LP16 states that development should not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring users such as noise, light pollution, loss of privacy and loss of light.
- 10.23. Whilst a 'site plan' has been submitted, this is purely indicative as the application only seeks outline consent with all other matters reserved for subsequent consideration. The application form does not state the composition of the dwellings other than they will be market housing. It is considered that the dwellings could be designed, with the appropriate orientation, window layout and landscaping to limit any adverse overlooking and could also be designed to limit any overbearing and shadowing. Any impact on residential amenity in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy would be re-visited at the reserved matters stage once the scale and appearance of the dwellings can be fully assessed and, upon which, neighbours would have further opportunity to comment.

### **Highways/parking**

- 10.24. The site is located along Hospital Road which is a narrow unclassified road with no street lights or footpaths and ditches either side. Whilst the eventual highway details would come forward as part of any reserved matters application, there should be a certainty that a scheme is capable of being achieved that does not impinge on highway/pedestrian safety/sustainability of a scheme.
- 10.25. Whilst the application is in outline form with all matters reserved, the agent submitted an amended, indicative plan that shows three new and separate access points to Hospital Road. Hospital Road is subject in part to the national speed limit, meaning vehicle speeds up to 60mph are permissible. In order to ensure that safe access can be achieved the inter-vehicular visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m would be required from at least one location along the site frontage and this must be contained within the application boundary and / or the highway boundary. The latest submission demonstrates that the site is capable of achieving 2.4m x 190m to the north and 2.4m x 97m to the south. No evidence or justification has been provided to support those reduced splays. Therefore, these are insufficient.
- 10.26. Highways Officers raised concerns of Hospital Road and its potential to accommodate additional traffic. They also note that a lack of footway provision along Hospital Road could undermine the sustainable credentials of the site as it would require future residents to walk in the carriageway. While this is not unusual in rural areas, it is not conducive with a safe / attractive pedestrian environment. Comments also state that the proposal is considered in light of the nearby consent F/YR23/0070/O and its associated highway mitigation requirements which includes the widening of the road to between 4.8m and 5.3m and the provision of a footpath, albeit at a reduced width, 1.6m, of a standard footpath of 2m. The highway improvement works were indicated and approved

with a condition. There is the possibility, however, that the site approved would not come forward and therefore the LPA required details to be submitted indicating updated highway visibility splays and highway improvement works.

- 10.27. The agent submitted an amended plan with visibility splays marked and annotated to state that the road would be widened. No other details were submitted and therefore there is no certainty that the scheme is capable of being achieved in isolation that does not impinge on highway/pedestrian safety/sustainability.
- 10.28. Para 115 of the NPPF (2023) is explicit in that 'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'. County Highways have confirmed that the visibility splays are not sufficient, and concerns have been raised in respect of the highway improvement works. These appear ambiguous and lacks sufficiently clear detail to set out what works are proposed. The proposal is therefore considered to fail to comply with policy LP15 of the Local Plan and paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

### **Biodiversity**

- 10.29. Local Plan Policy LP16 (b) identifies that proposals for new development will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the proposal protects and enhances biodiversity on and surrounding the proposal site.
- 10.30. Policy LP19 identifies that the Council will refuse permission for development that would cause demonstrable harm to a protected habitat or species, unless the need for and public benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm and mitigation and/or compensation measures can be secured.
- 10.31. The subject site contains hedgerows and ditches along the eastern boundary. County Ecology have commented stating that the proposal is acceptable on ecology grounds with an informative to be included in respect of removal of vegetation. As such, the proposal complies with Policies LP16 (b) and LP19 of the Fenland Local Plan.
- 10.32. The application pre-dates the requirement to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain.

## **11 CONCLUSIONS**

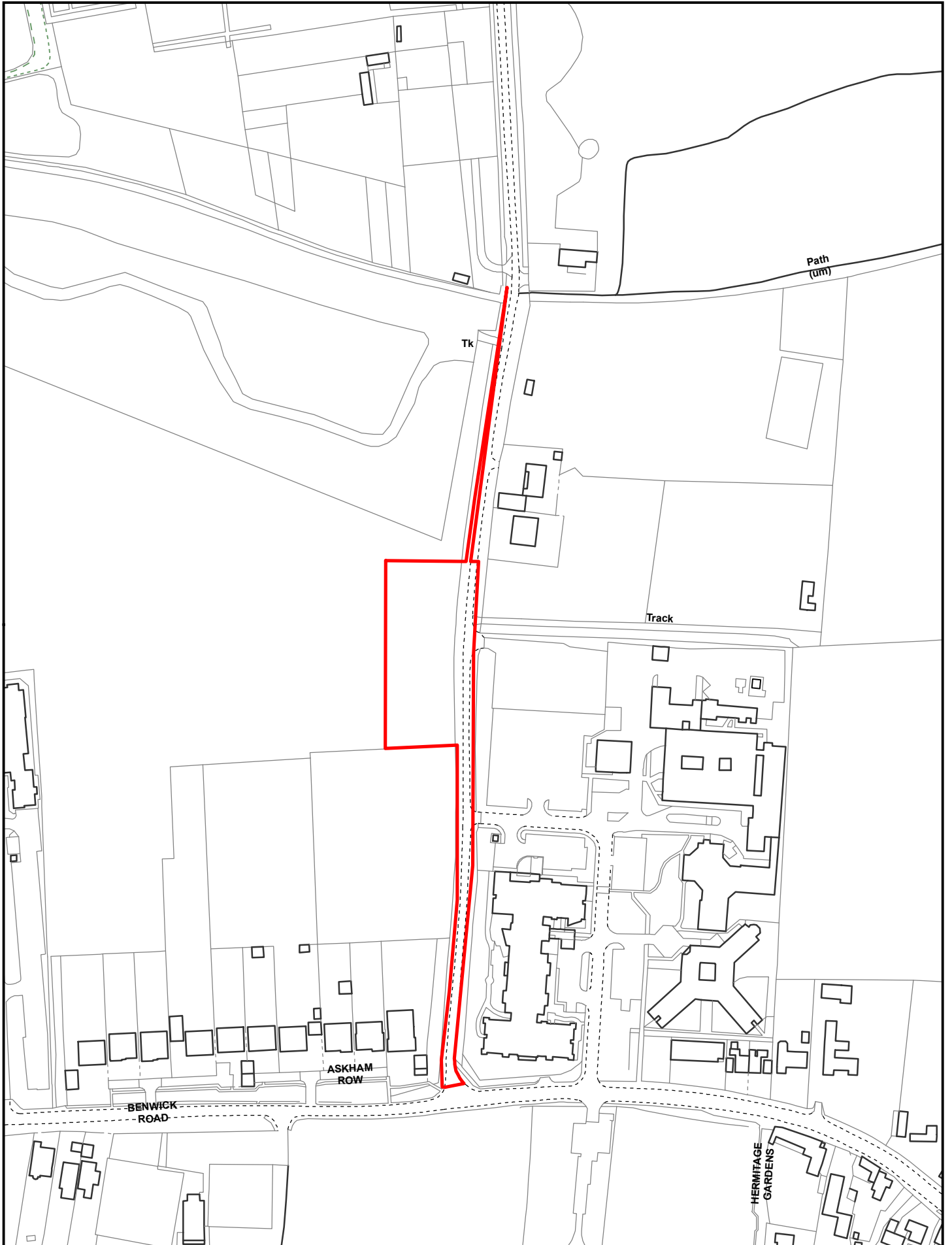
- 11.1. It is considered that the development will result in significant and demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area. The limited benefits derived through the erection of three dwellings are not considered sufficient enough to outweigh this harm, particularly given the location of the dwellings in relation to local services which will likely result in a primary reliance on private motor vehicles contrary to the transport aims of the Local Plan and the NPPF.
- 11.2. The proposal is therefore considered to constitute unsustainable development due to an unacceptable harm to the character of the area and the introduction of dwellings in an unsustainably linked area having regard to the development plan when taken as a whole. Likewise, the development is considered to conflict with the design and overall sustainability aims as set out in the NPPF.

## **12 RECOMMENDATION**

**Refuse;** for the following reasons:

1	The site does not lie adjacent to the continuous built form of the settlement of Doddington and is in a countryside location, defined as "elsewhere" in policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan. The development of this site for up to three
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	<p>dwelling fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the pattern and character of the surrounding natural landscape and built character of the immediate area which is sporadic, interspersed with open land and largely frontage development. It would be inconsistent with the core shape of the village and would appear incongruous both in terms of the landscape character of the area and in terms of visual appearance to adjacent occupiers of land/property and users of the nearby public footpath network. It will inevitably result in the severance of a continuous length of hedgerow to the east boundary of the site with Hospital Road which will result in a further urbanising impact and an adverse impact on the verdant rural character. As such the proposal is contrary to policies LP3, LP12 A (a), (c), (d) and (f), LP16 (c) and (d) and paragraphs 135 and 180 of the NPPF.</p>
2	<p>The development proposed would be accessed via Hospital Road, a single carriageway road with no separate pedestrian or cycle facilities or streetlighting. Insufficient information has been submitted outlining the highway improvement works. No other details were forthcoming and therefore there is no certainty that the scheme is capable of being achieved, in isolation, that does not impinge on highway/pedestrian safety/sustainability. The development would therefore be contrary to paragraph 115 of the NPPF with an unacceptable impact upon highway safety and policies LP2 and LP15 which aims to provide safe transport networks.</p>
3	<p>The applicant has failed to demonstrate adequate visibility splays to the proposed access points to the satisfaction of the Highways Authority and in accordance with the speed of the road. The intensification of the access points combined with the lack of such visibility would result in an unacceptable degree of hazard to highway users to the detriment of highway safety. The proposal therefore fails to comply with policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan and paragraph 115 of the NPPF.</p>



Created on: 08/11/2024

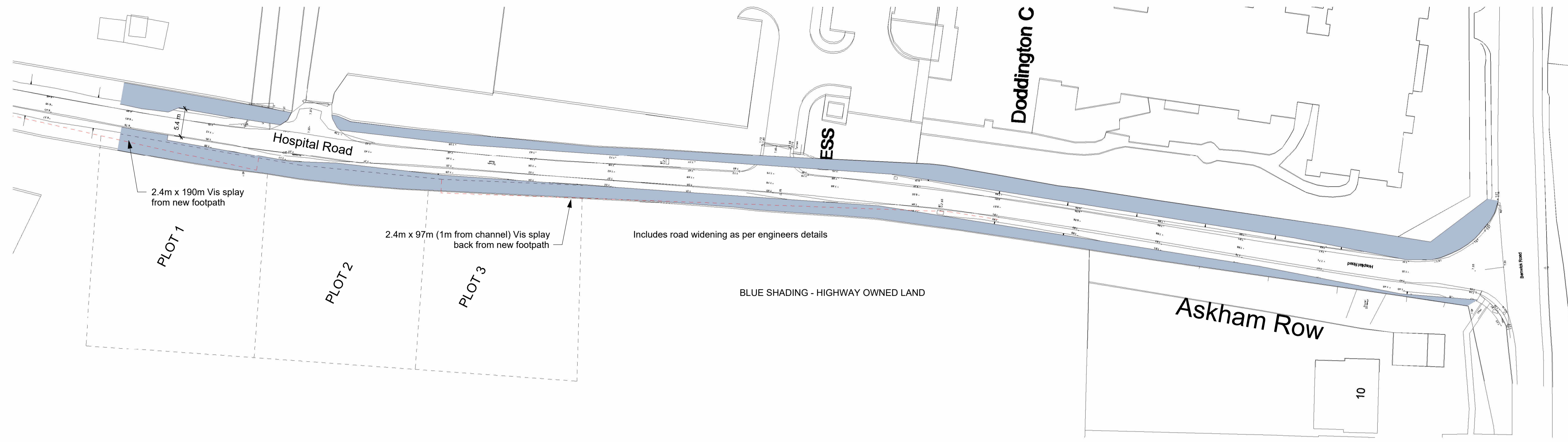
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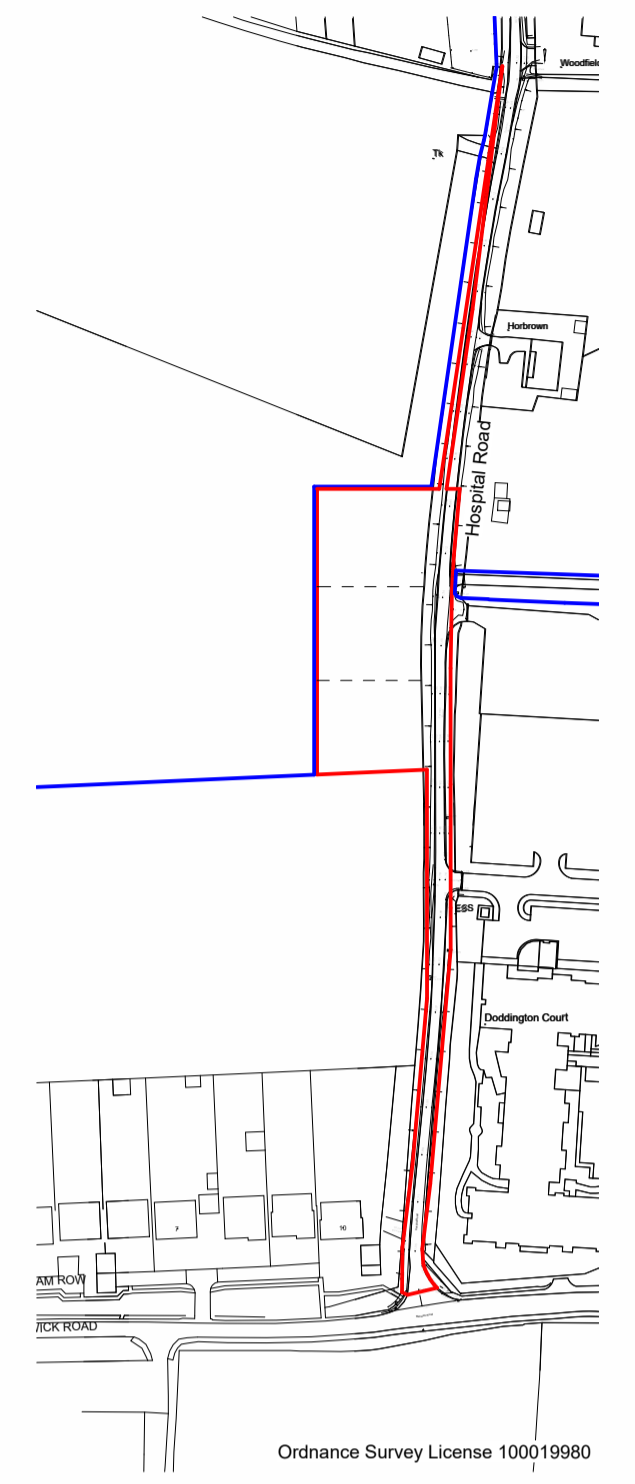
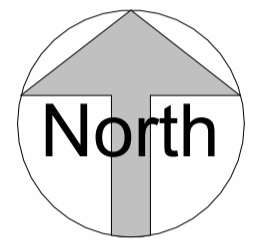
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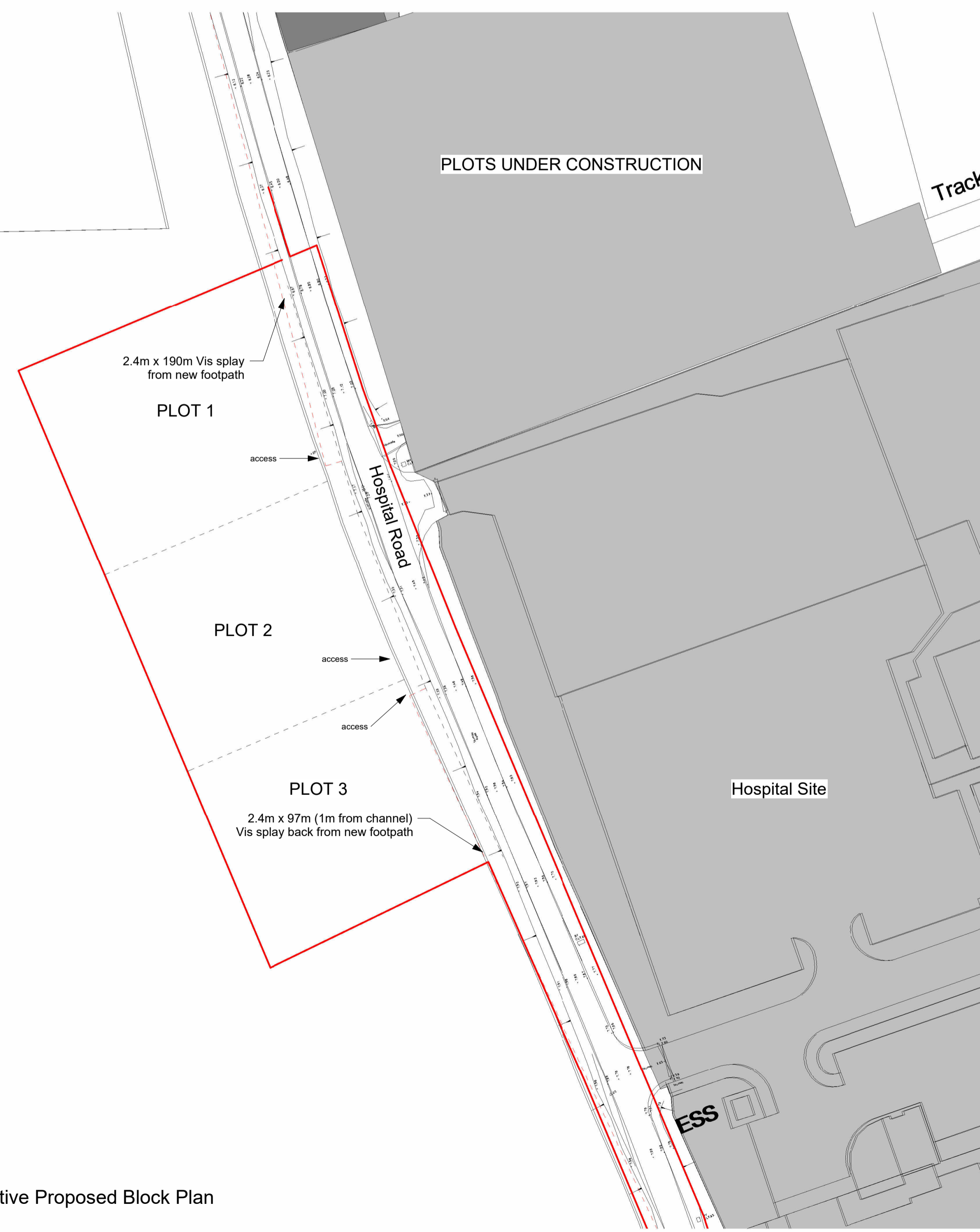
**Notes**  
 Any discrepancies to be brought to attention of Author as soon as possible.  
 All dimensions shown in "mm" unless otherwise shown.  
 Unless stated otherwise, this drawing has been assessed for risks and nothing is deemed to be outside of normal good safe working practice that would be covered by a contractors Construction Phase Health and Safety Plan.  
 Do note scale from this drawing.



Highway Works  
 Scale 1 : 500



Location Plan  
 Scale 1 : 2500



Indicative Proposed Block Plan  
 Scale 1 : 500

D	Speed limit reduction removed, visibility splay increased	02-09-24
C	Highway works added	24-08-24
B	Site Outline Amended, 30mph relocation amended	17-08-24
A	30Mph speed limit moved, visibility splays amended	25-01-24

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Proposed Plots at Hospital Road, Doddington  
 Mr and Mrs Cutteridge

Planning

date created	scale	drawing no.	rev.
21-10-22	As Indicated @ A1	319 - P100	D