Update Report

In support of
Outline Planning Application Ref: H11-0936-18
for Residential Development of 6 'AFFORDABLE' units

Land at St James Road Long Sutton



Prepared on behalf of: DCF Builders
Greenworld Park
Sutton Bridge
Spalding
Lincs
PE129RN

Report Reference: DCF-LR-SJR-XX-RPT-AR-0001(rev A)

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Application site

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides an update towards the application generally, and some additional supportive information in relation to the proposal.

1.2 The application was deferred at September 2019 planning committee meeting, contrary to the officer's recommendation at that time, with a generally positive committee toward the application proposal, and a request from the committee chairman that further details on the proposed mechanism for providing the units be explained. This was the only reason for deferral after being proposed and recommended at committee before the deferral.

1.3 This site is now a step closer to having the ability to become delivered, with a builder/developer now on board to take the site through to construction. There has obviously been some time delay getting to this point due to the CV-19 pandemic.

1.4 There is also a draft S106 agreement for consideration now proposed, for final review and necessary wording amendment by the legal teams as deemed required, in anticipation for a timely turnaround.

1.5 Albeit this report should be read in conjunction with all previous documentation provided, it is additionally intended to further describe the opportunity in its own right, for the benefit of the planning officer and the committee members, but also the strategic housing team, consultees and the public.

2. Application Site Description

2.1 The application site is on the southern side of the A17, but still arguably adjacent the settlement boundary, just not immediately ‘abutting’.

2.2 Due to the A17 sever of Cowpers Gate, The roundabout provides the abutment of the settlement boundary as defined in the local plan, but following the looped spur/link road off of the roundabout (that was constructed to avoid the car garage / access), the housing immediately continues again for a few hundred yards. The photo below shows the road looping around to avoid the garage.



There is a run of linear residential development along St James Road and from the t-junction onto Browns Gate as per photos below.





2.3 The linear ribbon type development continues along St James Road for approximately 400 metres, and comes to an end by way of a more modern cul-de-sac private drive development of detached bungalows namely Bramble Close.

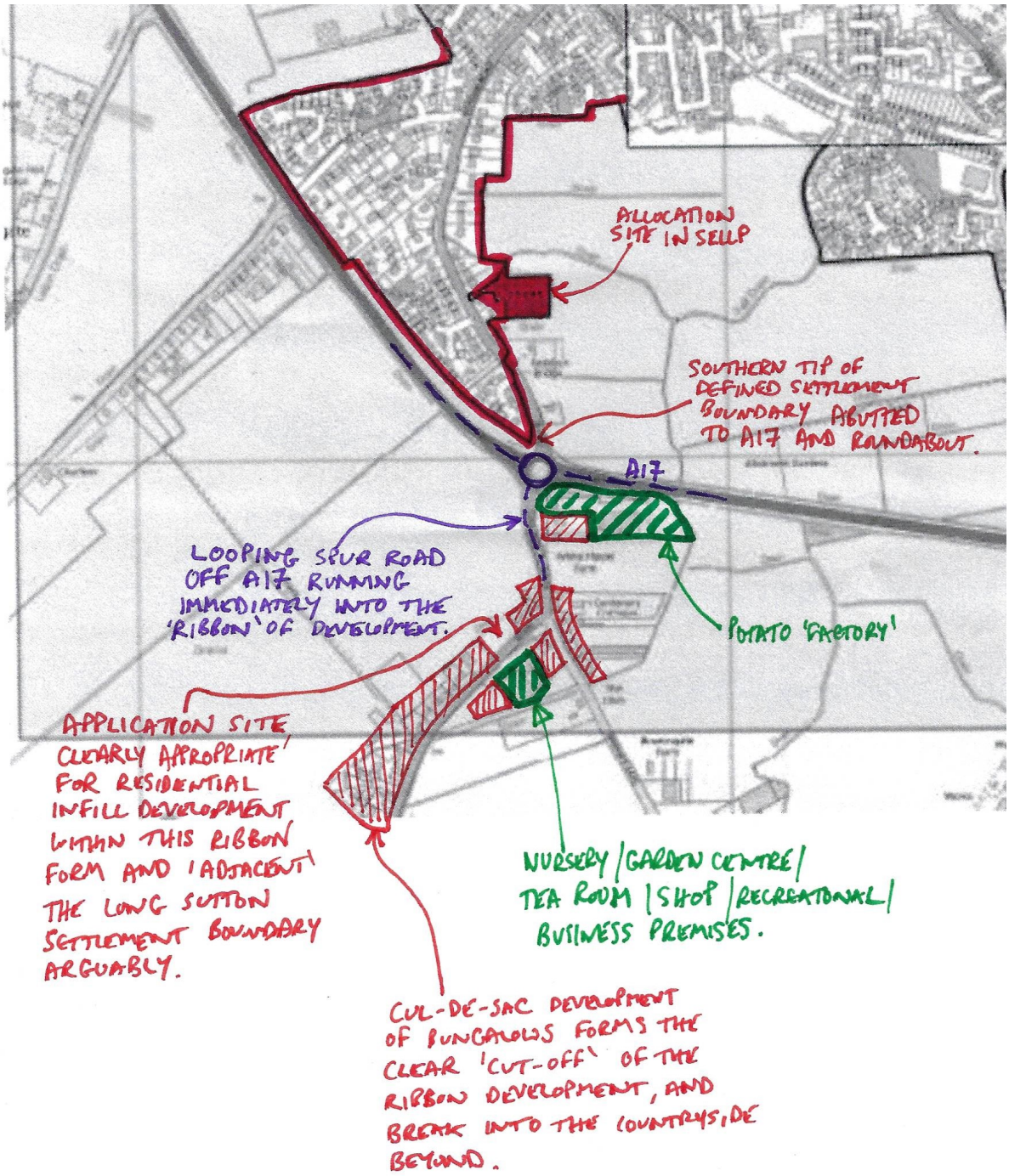


2.4 The application site itself lends itself to becoming in-filled, as its road frontage with development each side, and is divided off from the field behind by a small ditch, therefore the rear boundary is delineated, aligned through with the development either side as per the photo below.

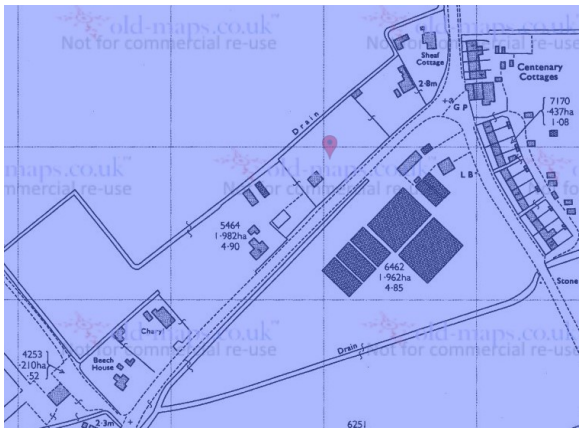


Photo showing parcel of land delineated and separate from the farmland.

The site is inappropriate for farming due to size and enclosure. It is purely reflective of residential proportion as per its previous use, as per the diagrammatic explanation on the following page.

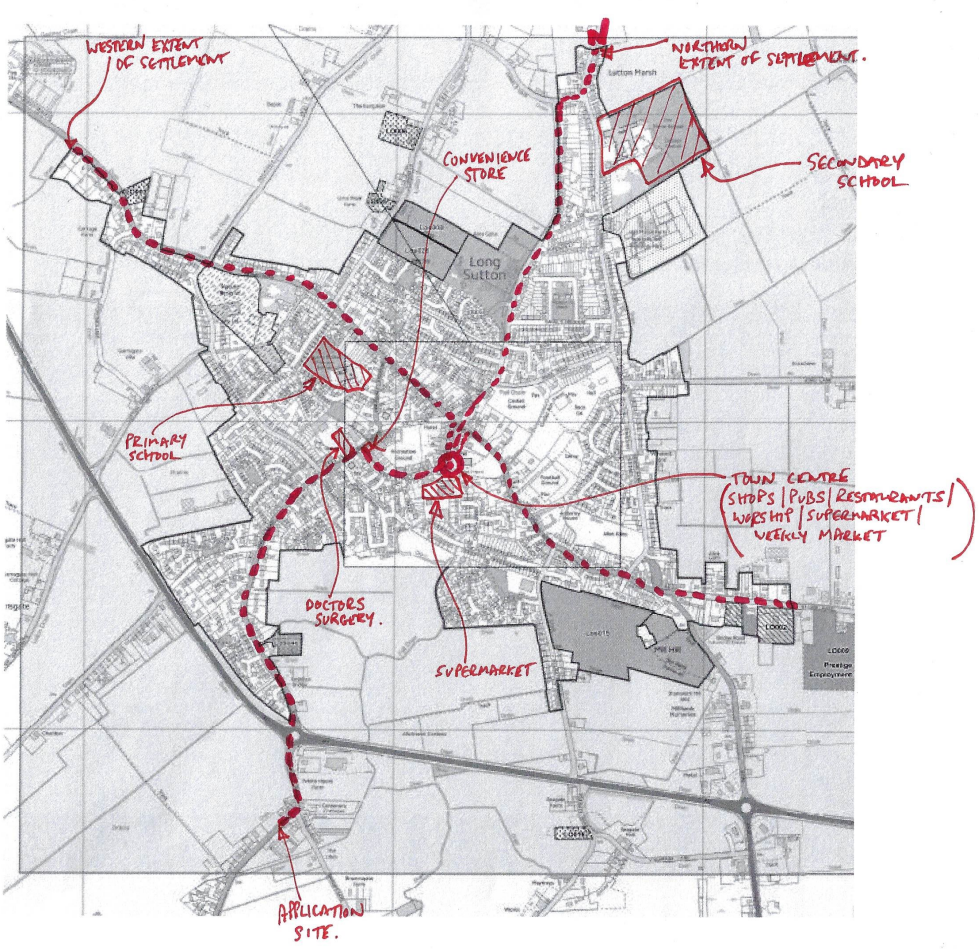


2.5 The application site is opposite a former nursery site which has respectfully diversified and now offers a garden centre, tea room, shop, recreational and business premises'. Therefore, the application site is surrounded by development on 3 sides, and in fact was a previously developed site itself, as can be seen on the historic map below. There was a former dwelling on the land which was demolished in previous years.



Old MAP – 1972, identifying former dwelling on part of the site

2.6 The site is within walking and certainly cycling distance of the town centre, and as demonstrated within this report, is no further out from the town centre than the other edge of town areas of the settlement in the north, east and westerly directions. The diagram below simply shows how the application site is as well connected to the town as any of the other outer extents of the settlement boundary.



2.7 There are a number of residents from this neighbourhood that walk and cycle into the town centre on a daily basis, therefore proves the location is very sustainable and suitable. The names and numbers of the residents referred can be provided, although for data protection purposes we haven't included within this report.

2.8 There is a footpath from Cowper's Gate (the settlement boundary) which safely crosses the A17 in 2 parts as per the photos below and comes past the garage and into the built up area where the application site is positioned.





2.9 In addition to the services immediately on offer (as referred to in paragraph 2.5) the site also has the added benefit of being on a local call connect bus route, it has mains sewer within the road frontage, and BT fibre kiosk immediately adjacent. There is street lighting outside and interestingly there is a designated local cycle route that passes nearby.

3. Site Surroundings & Characteristics

3.1 If we take Long Sutton town centre as being the gated entrance to the church, below is a comparison of other residential development proposals that have been granted permission that **were not** within the residential settlement boundary, and can be directly compared with this proposal.

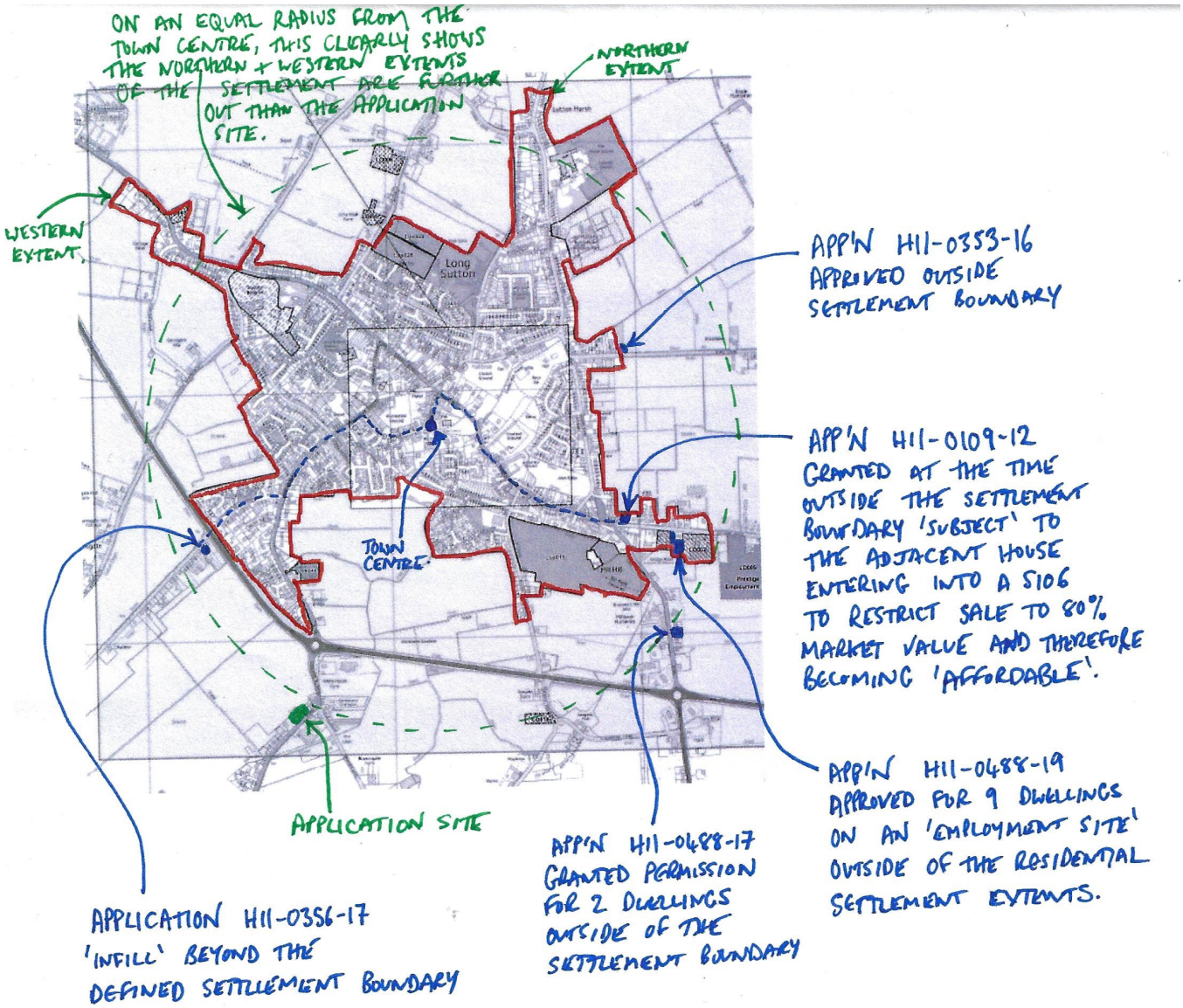


Diagram showing direct comparison sites on the edge of Long Sutton settlement

3.2 Application H11-0356-17 received a grant of planning permission adjacent No. 43 Delph Road. This site was also positioned on the southern side of the main A17 on a piece of land being used as a small nursery. This piece of land had some residential on both sides but was out of the identified settlement boundary. This site is 1.2km walking distance from the town centre.

3.3 Application H11-0109-12 received a grant of planning permission for a single dwelling. This site was located on Bridge Road Long Sutton, outside of the settlement boundary and is 1.2km walking distance from the town centre. Interestingly, this development was granted subject to the neighbouring semi detached house then owned by the applicant being entered into a S106 agreement, whereby the semi detached house would be restricted to being sold at 80% of market value. We do note that interestingly this house has been marketed a couple of times since then and has quickly sold as obviously that reduced affordable value is of interest to many families.

3.4 It is worthwhile noting that the distance of this application site from the town centre is no worse than the outer settlement boundaries of the town in other directions. The application site is 1.7km walking distance from the town centre. To the west, along Gedney Road, the boundary measures 1.75km. It is noted that there is currently another dwelling being constructed by RKWilson Builders here, again between 2 other more recent dwellings. The northern extent of the settlement boundary measures at 1.6km walking distance from the town centre, just 0.3km beyond the towns secondary school 'University Academy Long Sutton'. Obviously this location is a daily journey on foot or by bicycle by children from all extents of Long Sutton, clearly demonstrating that these distances are travelled each and every day by the community.

3.5 Application H11-0488-19 was granted reserved matters approval for the development of 9 dwellings which were outside of the residential settlement area but were within the area identified as a proposed employment area in the local plan and the site was wedged between 2 employment zone areas, close to residential settlement but certainly not amongst it. This site is again similar distance from the town centre as the application site.

3.6 Application H11-0488-17 received a grant of planning permission for residential development, located at windmill garage on the Wisbech Road. This application indicated 2 detached dwellings and was located out of the settlement boundary of the town, and a similar walking distance from the town centre to this proposed application. Another similarity with the site at Wisbech Road was that again a small stretch of farmland frontage was between it and the main settlement boundary, but the permitted site also then sat between residential development and in effect generally formed a continuation of the settlement adjacent too, but possibly not 'up against' or 'abutting'.

4. Uniqueness and Comparisons

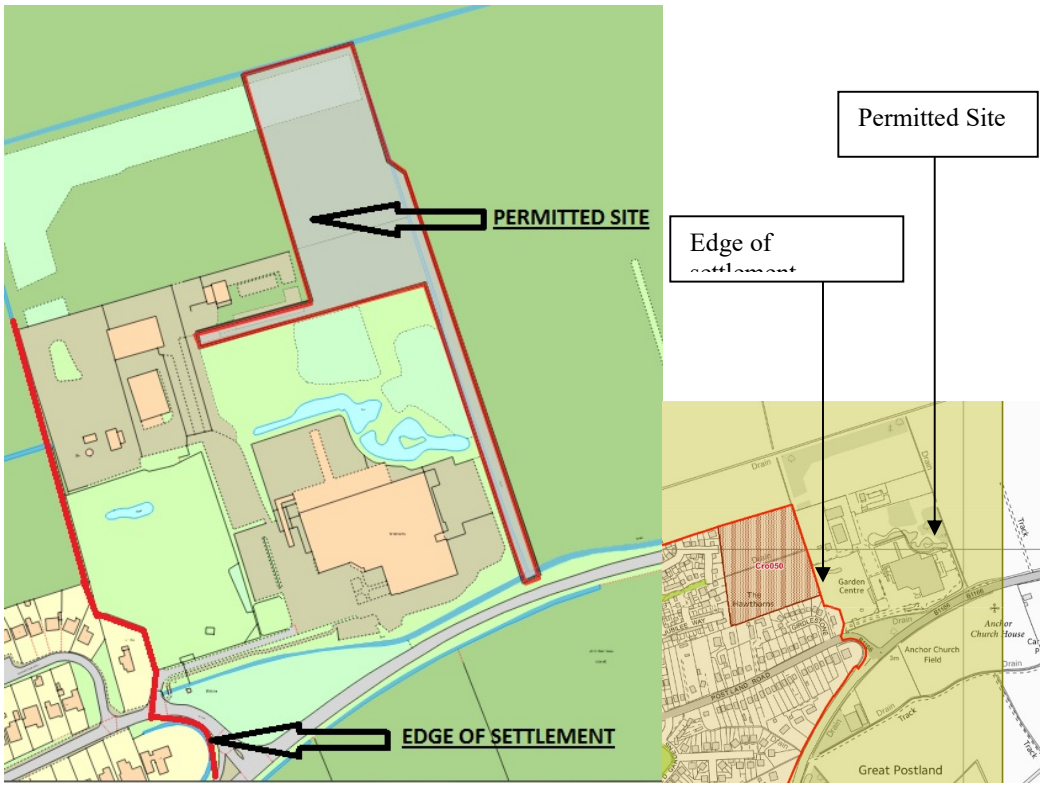
4.1 This application site is very unique in its own right, and should not be compared with other general sites that are otherwise identified as 'development in the open countryside'.

4.2 As described previously within this report, although this site is not specifically 'abutting' the defined settlement boundary of the town, it is without doubt adjacent to the settlement save the small stretch of road looping off the roundabout. Quite why this residential area has not got a settlement boundary enclosing it, yet the residential area of Little Sutton has seems rather an area one would dispute from the adopted local plan. It may just be that the A17 was considered the demarcation, yet the principle of including this settlement area along with the extent of Delph Road on the south side of the A17 would seem wholly appropriate. And as per previous comment regarding permissions given outside of the settlement boundary line, infill was agreed at Delph Road South side.

4.3 This area at St James Road is unique in comparison with other small settlements within the district in that it does have provision of services including garden centre, shop, tea room etc, whereas other settlement areas defined in the local plan policy 1 spatial strategy as 'areas of development restraint that **do have** a defined settlement boundary allowing some infill, actually offer little or even no services in comparison with what we have here.

4.4 Due to how this site fits within adjacent consecutive residencies and being road frontage with a defined rear boundary to the site, separated from the farmland, it again lends itself to infill development. This isn't just a stretch of general farmland between some minor housing, as can be seen in many cases throughout the district, where the landowner suddenly may deem the end of his field as infill just because a house is either side, this is a unique and appropriate site offering just that extra 'definition'.

4.5 There was recently a permission obtained in Crowland, application reference H02-0669-19, whereby councillors determined that that particular site was 'adjacent' the settlement boundary, and was therefore an appropriate site to permit. The extracts of the permitted site in relation to the settlement boundary of Crowland is identified on the following page:



4.6 If this particular site in Crowland is compared directly with our application site, then it would be wholly clear that our application site is far more appropriate with regards to accessibility back into the town and its relationship to the settlement generally. A very long single track access roadway nearly 300m long was permitted to even give the access to the permitted site in Crowland tucked away behind a former garden centre and poorly related to the existing built up residential area of Crowland and physically and functionally detached, whereas this application at St James Road Long Sutton is frontage, much more adjacent the settlement than that particular site was, and retains a physical and functional attachment to the settlement and immediate surroundings.

4.7 Another very similar situation, where on face value a development site was given planning permission on the opposite side of the A17 to where the defined settlement boundary is, is the site of Ashwood Homes' at Penny Hill reference H09-0475-18. This site was originally permitted for affordable housing, and then a new application was submitted to omit the affordable housing requirement and the site has since been built as open market. There is also a permission for some more housing nearby that particular site.

4.8 Nearby at Sutton Bridge, there were other examples of small low cost pairs of semi-detached housing given permission, 2 pairs that have now been finished and one pair still to be commenced under permission references H18-0910-14 & H18-0704-17. These were originally given permission for being 'close' to the 'proposed' settlement boundary, but were never within it. They are a long way from the central area of the village, and again were permitted as 'affordable units', however were later amended to be open market units.

Again, many examples of permitted schemes outside of the settlement boundaries, but still none that offer the discounted housing as affordable dwellings as this proposed scheme does!

5. Site benefits

5.1 SHDC have allocated circa 500 dwellings at Long Sutton alone within the newly adopted local plan. It is becoming very apparent that for the larger allocated development sites, developers are submitting viability reports and often obtaining a reduction in the policy level affordable home requirement of 25% on sites of 11 or more dwellings. It is therefore very likely that just for Long Sutton, there will be a shortfall of affordable dwellings in comparison to the number expected through the local plan policy requirement.

5.2 However, this site now has a builder/developer on board which gives the certainty that the site can now become delivered, but more importantly, we have a landowner and a builder that are both working together allowing the builder to openly offer this small number of discounted open market dwellings as 'affordable housing' as ultimately the land owner is offering the land at a sensible but reasonable value to allow this proposal.

5.3 The developer is keen to utilise modern sustainable systems and has an environmental conscience, where air source heating shall be used in conjunction with extremely high insulation standards, PV boosting to hot water and installation provision for electric car charging points.

5.4 These affordable dwellings are adjacent a main service centre town, and therefore this should immediately be seen as a benefit to the local area and to South Holland District Council, as there will be provision of an end product that is ordinarily becoming more denied from the council on allocated sites

6. Mechanism of provision

6.1 The proposed dwellings will be offered with a section 106 tie to 80% of open market value. A draft of this type of S106 is attached in Appendix A.
There will be an associated fee at the times when the properties are sold which will be payable to SHDC in order to validate future purchasers, to ascertain they are of low income earners, or as a direct appreciation to the country, the builder also proposes to allow employees of the NHS to be an acceptable applicant to purchase(this point requires the buyers lawyer and SHDC lawyer to insert the relevant wording into the draft attached in Appendix A, as currently this is not noted therein). We shall ensure there is also a restrictive covenant on the deeds reflecting this requirement. There shall be a longstop marketing duration, which would allow the builder and subsequent owners to sell to registered providers or under the circumstance that rental values are also a maximum of 80% of market rates, but again upon sale of the dwelling it remains at 80% OMV.

6.2 As with other planning permissions, any committee decision in favour of this proposal would be subject to the S106 being agreed, and therefore that would be suitably worded between the builders solicitor and SHDC's solicitor to reflect the proposal within the previous paragraph.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This application proposal is for the provision of 6 dwellings that will be subject to a section 106 whereby the dwellings will be sold to qualifying purchasers at 80% of open market value.

7.2 The proposal offers much needed affordable homes not just for this particular area, but for the whole district and wider still, the whole country.

7.3 The offering is a commitment of the builder and applicant, and a commitment that should be well received by SHDC, given that the numbers of affordable homes expected to be delivered from allocation sites are becoming less likely through viability assessments.

7.4 The proposed site is a unique opportunity, whereby it can be justified on its own merits that it meets numerous sustainability tests, with regards to surroundings,distance from the town centre, proximity to local amenities, schools and services etc.

The site will offer a rural surrounding to potential rural agricultural workers that may fall into the qualifying bracket, but also non-estate housing to persons in qualifying brackets of Key workers, NHS staff and many other. There are numerous local employment opportunities within factories and packing, and even now Premier Foods is undergoing a 70million extension which gives some reassurance that more local workers may have opportunities

7.5 The site lends itself in all respects for a road frontage infill of respectfully proportioned residential development, between and within a residential linear ribbon in both directions from the site, on a site that is not practical for farming, is separated from farmland behind, and did actually have a previous residential use.

7.6 This is a sustainable location, and a location that is in principle adjacent to the settlement boundary of one of the districts largest service centre towns.

7.7 When assessed on its own merits and when compared to other permissions obtained outside of the settlement boundary demarcation, not only for Long Sutton but also other locations, this site is well justified for obtaining a planning approval with what it has to offer.

8. Appendix A – Draft S106 Agreement / Proposed example

(subject to lawyer checking/approval)