

DECISION DELEGATED TO HEAD OF PLANNING

Application No: H14-0523-26 **Applicant:** Venture Business Space Limited

Proposal: Change of use of former public house to a shop (Class E) including part demolition, single storey rear extension & external works

Location: The Bell Inn 33 Church Street Pinchbeck

Terminal Date: 18th September 2026

Planning Policies

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan - Adopted: March 2019

01	Spatial Strategy
02	Development Management
03	Design of New Development
04	Approach to Flood Risk
24	The Retail Hierarchy
25	Supporting the Vitality and Viability of Boston and Spalding Town Centres
27	Additional Retail Provision
28	The Natural Environment
29	The Historic Environment
30	Pollution
32	Community, Health and Well-being
36	Vehicle and Cycle Parking
APPENDIX 6	Parking Standards

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework August 2026

Chapter 3 - Decision-making
Chapter 4 - Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 7 - Building a strong, effective economy
Chapter 8 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
Chapter 12 - Making effective use of land
Chapter 14 - Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 15 - Promoting sustainable transport
Chapter 17 - Pollution, public protection and security
Chapter 18 - Managing flood risk and coastal change
Chapter 19 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Chapter 20 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Representations:

	Object	Support	No Obj.	Comments
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PARISH COUNCIL	1	0	0	0
WARD MEMBER	0	0	0	0
HIGHWAYS & SUDS SUPPORT	0	0	0	1
WELLAND AND DEEPINGS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	0	0	0	1
SHDC INTERNAL	1	0	1	0
OTHER STATUTORY BODIES	0	0	0	3
RESIDENTS	5	0	0	0

CASE OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Proposal

This full application seeks permission to change the use of the former Bell Inn to a convenience shop within Use Class E. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing rear additions and the construction of a single-storey rear extension. The main part of the former public house, including its principal elevation and roof form, would be retained and refurbished.

The completed building would provide approximately 355sqm of gross floorspace, including 225sqm of net retail sales area. The proposed opening hours are 06:00 to 23:00, seven days a week.

The existing access from Church Street would be used. The development would provide 25 parking spaces, including accessible and electric-vehicle spaces, together with motorcycle and cycle parking. Turning and servicing space for a small rigid HGV would be provided at the rear.

Other works include external lighting, landscaping, a plant compound, refuse and recycling storage, drainage works and alterations to the access, footway and kerbing. Surface water would be stored within an underground attenuation system and discharged to the eastern boundary watercourse at a restricted rate of 2 litres per second.

Site Description

The application site relates to the Bell Inn public House which fronts Church Street opposite the junction with Church Walk. The site benefits from an extant planning permission to convert the building into residential apartments (as part of a larger scheme), this relates to The Bell Inn and its former paddock. The Bell Inn appears on original OS mapping. Though with a smaller footprint, the front entrance was blocked up during the 20th Century.

The PH is at present boarded up with Heras fencing preventing access to its rear. It is finished in a cream painted facing brick with black soldier course and advertising to the front. The building is bookended by chimneys and to the rear is more ad hoc and has with former extension providing a more irregular aesthetic (to its formal frontage).

The proposal is within defined settlement limits of Pinchbeck (and Spalding) and is also located within the conservation area, the surrounding area is characterised by buildings of varying ages and designs. A Fish & Chip Shop is located to the south of the Bell Inn, this has space for patrons to park to the front.

The closest listed buildings are located to the north, on Church Street. There is also a listed building, 'Former Doctors Surgery' located on Church walk, all of which are Grade II. The Parish of St Marys which is located to the south of the Bell Inn is a Grade I listed building.

The site is within Pinchbeck Conservation Area. The site is in Environment Agency Flood Zone 3, but low risk in terms of the South East Lincolnshire SFRA

History

H14-1131-92 Full - Replacement windows - Refused - 11 December 1992.

H14-1002-25 Full - Proposed change of use of ex-Bell public house to fall within Use Class E including part demolition, single storey rear extension and external works including hard and soft landscaping, external lighting and plant compound. Refused 14-01-26

H14-0621-94 Full - Domestic garage and shed - Approved - 11 October 1994.

H14-0097-96 Full - Dining room extension - Approved - 30 April 1996

H14-1172-17 Full -Demolition of existing building; creation of new single-storey A1 retail unit, with associated car park and rear yard area (with fencing); creation of new access road into site, with turning area for delivery vehicles; removal of trees - Application Withdrawn - 26 March 2018.

H14-0219-22 - THE BELL INN - Conversion of the ex-Bell Public House into five flats and the development of nine detached bungalows to the rear. Approved 06-04-23

H14-0583-25 - Proposed change of use of ex-Bell public house to fall within Use Class E including part demolition, single storey rear extension and external works including hard and soft landscaping, external lighting and plant compound. Withdrawn

Consultations

Pinchbeck Parish Council

Objects. While supporting the reuse of the vacant building, the Parish Council considers that the demolition, extension and external alterations would harm the Conservation Area. Concerns are also raised regarding highway safety, parking pressure and effects upon neighbouring amenity.

Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board

No objection in principle to surface-water discharge restricted to 2 litres per second. The discharge would require the Board's prior written consent, agreement of technical details and payment of the applicable contribution. The receiving watercourse must have sufficient capacity, and separate consent would be required for any watercourse alteration.

Lincolnshire County Council Highways and SuDS Support

Following the submission of additional information demonstrating the access width, visibility arrangements and associated kerbing, Lincolnshire County Council issued its final combined Highway and Lead Local Flood Authority response on 5th August 2026.

The Highway Authority raises no objection and concludes that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact upon highway safety or a severe residual cumulative impact upon the highway network. It acknowledges that parking demand could occasionally exceed the 25 spaces provided but considers that the availability of on-street parking nearby means this would not result in an unacceptable highway-safety impact.

LLFA-Lincolnshire County Council's combined Highway and Lead Local Flood Authority response dated 5th August 2026 raises no objection and concludes that the proposal would not increase surface-water flood risk. The County Council confirms that, because this is a minor application,

responsibility for assessing the detailed drainage proposals remains with the Local Planning Authority.

Council Ecologist

Confirms that two non-breeding bat roosts are present within the building. A European Protected Species licence, supported by a bat mitigation strategy, would be required before relevant works commence. The mitigation and enhancement measures within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal should be conditioned.

Retention of tree T443 is recommended because it contains two potential bat-roost features. Mandatory BNG is considered achievable, although approximately 1.14 off-site habitat units would be required, reducing to approximately 0.95 units if T443 is retained. A Biodiversity Gain Plan, final metric and evidence securing the off-site units would be required.

Environmental Protection

Objects because the submitted Phase 2 Site Investigation identifies a possible ground-gas risk but confirms that monitoring remains in progress. The officer is unable to reach a final conclusion until the completed monitoring and assessment have been reviewed.

Historic Places Team

No objection. Although archaeological remains were identified on adjacent land, the nature and limited ground impact of this development mean that significant archaeological effects are unlikely. No further archaeological work is required unless the proposals materially change.

Conservation Officer

Considers the principle of conversion supportable and supports the proposed works to the principal elevation. However, further justification is sought for the substantial demolition of the rear range and additional details are requested for the new entrance on the south elevation.

If permission is granted, conditions are recommended requiring a historic building record, approval of external materials, portico and window-joinery details, and retention of the historic hanging sign on the west elevation.

Representations

The application has been publicised in accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order 2015 (as amended). Five objections have been received, including the Parish Council's representation. The concerns raised can be summarised as follows:

- there is no demonstrated need for another convenience store, given the existing stores on Knight Street and elsewhere nearby;
- the proposed retail use would be inappropriate within this predominantly residential location and Conservation Area;
- long opening hours, customer activity, deliveries, servicing, plant and external lighting would cause noise and disturbance to neighbouring residents;
- the demolition, extension and external works would harm the character and appearance of the Bell Inn and the Conservation Area;
- the access has restricted visibility, particularly having regard to the nearby bend in Church Street;
- additional traffic would prejudice highway and pedestrian safety;
- the proposed car park may be insufficient or underused, resulting in additional on-street parking;
- the cumulative effects of this proposal and the associated residential development have not been adequately considered; and
- concerns remain regarding drainage infrastructure and the wider effects of the development upon the surrounding area.

Planning Considerations

The application proposes retail development, which is a main town-centre use. The site lies within the settlement boundary of Pinchbeck, within the Pinchbeck Conservation Area and within Flood Zone 3 as identified by the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning.

During the consideration of the application, a revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in August 2026, replacing the December 2024 Framework. Annex A confirms that its policies are material considerations which must be taken into account in decision-making from the date of publication. It also establishes that development-plan policies, or parts of them, which are materially inconsistent with the national decision-making policies should be given very limited weight. The application has therefore been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2026, including its implications for the weight afforded to relevant policies of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan.

The key considerations are:

- Principle of Development
- Retail Development, including the weight afforded to Policy 27
- Highway Safety
- Heritage and Design
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Environmental Issues and Amenity
- Land Contamination
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain
- Planning Balance

Principle of Development

Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan identifies Pinchbeck as a Main Service Centre. Within the settlement boundary of a Main Service Centre, development will be permitted where it supports the settlement's service-centre role, helps sustain existing facilities or meets the service needs of other local communities.

NPPF Policy S3 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy S4 states that development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy E2 states that substantial weight should be given to the economic benefits of commercial development which enables businesses to invest, expand or adapt. Policy L2 similarly requires substantial weight to be given to the benefits of making better use of vacant and underutilised land and buildings.

The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary and comprises a vacant former public house. Its reuse to provide a local facility is consistent with the role of Pinchbeck as a Main Service Centre and with the objectives of Policy 1.

Planning permission H14-0219-22 was approved on 6th April 2023 for the conversion of the former Bell Public House into five flats and the erection of nine detached bungalows to the rear. The permission has been implemented through works associated with the wider residential development; however, no conversion works have taken place to the Bell Inn itself. As such, the building remains physically unchanged and continues to comprise the former public house building, notwithstanding the extant permission for its conversion to residential use.

The proposal would bring a vacant and former community building back into active use, secure its long-term future, provide local employment and improve access to convenience goods. The retention and refurbishment of the building's principal frontage and roof form, together with the replacement of less satisfactory rear additions, would also provide heritage and townscape benefits. In accordance with Policies E2 and L2, substantial weight is given to the commercial benefits and the beneficial reuse of the vacant building.

Pinchbeck is not identified as a centre within the retail hierarchy established by Policy 24. The nearest designated centre is Spalding Town Centre, approximately 3km from the application site. The proposed convenience store therefore constitutes out-of-centre retail development for the purposes of the development plan and national policy.

The proposal must consequently be assessed against the relevant retail provisions of Policies 24 and 27 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and NPPF Policies TC3 and TC4. This assessment, including the consistency of Policy 27 with the National Planning Policy Framework and the weight that should be afforded to it, is undertaken below.

The principle of bringing the vacant building back into beneficial use within the settlement is supported by Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and national Policies S3, S4, E2 and L2. The detailed acceptability of the development, especially with regard to retail is considered against the remaining development-plan and national policy below.

Relationship between Policies 24 and 27

Policy 24 establishes the retail hierarchy and requires out-of-centre retail proposals not provided for under Policy 27 to satisfy the sequential test. It also requires an impact assessment for proposals providing 250sqm or more net retail floorspace outside Spalding Town Centre and the identified District and Local Centres.

Policy 27(c) applies specifically to local shops meeting the day-to-day needs of nearby residents. It limits such shops to 100sqm net unless a qualitative need arising from a geographical deficiency in food-shopping provision is demonstrated, in which case units of up to 500sqm net may be permitted.

The applicant contends that a proposal not provided for under Policy 27 may instead be assessed solely under the sequential and impact provisions of Policy 24. This interpretation is not accepted. The proposed development is expressly described as a local convenience store serving the day-to-day needs of nearby residents and therefore falls within the circumstances addressed by Policy 27(c).

The reference in Policy 24 to development "not provided for" under Policy 27 does not make the requirements of Policy 27 optional. The policies must be read together; otherwise, any local shop exceeding 100sqm could avoid the express floorspace and geographical-deficiency requirements of Policy 27(c). The proposal must therefore be assessed against both policies, although the consistency of Policy 27(c) with current national policy and the weight afforded to the resulting conflict are considered below.

Policy 27(c): Qualitative Need and Weight

The proposed store would provide 225sqm of net sales floorspace and therefore exceeds the 100sqm limitation in Policy 27(c). The applicant relies upon increased consumer choice, a wider range of goods, available expenditure and anticipated population growth to justify the proposed floorspace.

However, two convenience stores already operate on Knight Street within a short distance of the application site. The updated Retail Statement does not identify an underserved residential area, a material geographical gap in food-shopping provision or an accessibility constraint affecting the existing stores. While the expenditure assessment indicates that capacity may exist to support another store, this is a quantitative consideration and does not demonstrate the geographical deficiency required by Policy 27(c). The proposal therefore remains in conflict with that policy.

The weight afforded to this conflict must reflect the current national decision-making framework. Policies TC3 and TC4 address out-of-centre retail development through the sequential and impact tests. They do not require a separate demonstration of qualitative need. Policy S4 also states that development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies.

Insofar as Policy 27(c) would prevent the development solely because a qualitative geographical

need has not been demonstrated, despite the relevant national retail tests being satisfied, it is materially inconsistent with the current national decision-making framework. Annex A of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development-plan policies, or parts of them, which are materially inconsistent with national decision-making policies should be given very limited weight. Accordingly, although the proposal does not satisfy the qualitative geographical-need requirement of Policy 27(c), the resulting conflict is afforded very limited weight in determining the application.

Sequential assessment

Policy TC3 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy 24 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan require a sequential approach to proposals for main town-centre uses outside defined centres. Policy TC3 requires town-centre locations to be considered first, followed by edge-of-centre locations where a town-centre location is not feasible. Out-of-centre locations should only be considered where suitable sites are not available or expected to become available within a reasonable period.

Policy TC3 also requires applicants and local planning authorities to exercise flexibility in relation to matters such as format and scale. This does not require the applicant to disaggregate a single retail operation or alter the proposal to such an extent that it would become a fundamentally different development.

The previous application was refused because its sequential assessment considered only four alternative premises and did not demonstrate sufficient flexibility concerning scale, format and layout. The revised assessment responds to those concerns by considering ten premises within Spalding Town Centre or its 300-metre edge-of-centre area. It assesses their size, configuration, accessibility, servicing arrangements and ability to accommodate the proposed convenience store.

Most of the identified premises are substantially smaller than the proposed 355sqm gross store. Several provide between approximately 12sqm and 156sqm, while the larger alternatives of approximately 215sqm and 238sqm would still require a material reduction in the proposed sales area, storage, staff accommodation and other operational floorspace. Accommodating the proposal within these premises would therefore require a materially different form of development.

The former Hall Place premises are no longer available as a ground-floor retail unit, having been occupied as a betting office. The remaining upper-floor accommodation would not provide a suitable or accessible format for the proposed use. The assessment also considers whether 7 Market Place, which provides approximately 1,706sqm over two floors and is available in part, could accommodate the development. Occupation of the whole property would be disproportionate to the proposed store, while further subdivision of the ground floor would create practical difficulties relating to frontage, servicing and the configuration of the remaining accommodation.

The revised assessment demonstrates that the identified alternatives would either require a materially different development, are no longer available or would not provide a suitable and accessible format for the proposed convenience store. No suitable town-centre or edge-of-centre site has been identified which is available, or expected to become available within a reasonable period, and capable of accommodating the proposal with appropriate flexibility.

The proposal therefore satisfies the sequential requirements of Policy 24 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and Policy TC3 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The sequential reason for refusal imposed under application H14-1002-25 has been overcome and should not be repeated.

Retail Conclusion

The revised Retail Statement has materially expanded the search for alternative premises and provides a proportionate assessment of their size, configuration, accessibility and operational suitability. Applying appropriate flexibility in relation to format and scale, no suitable and available town-centre or edge-of-centre site has been identified. The proposal therefore satisfies Policy 24 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and Policy TC3 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed store would provide 225sqm of net retail floorspace and therefore falls below the 250sqm threshold at which Policy 24 requires a retail impact assessment in this location. It is also substantially below the national default threshold of 2,500sqm gross floorspace which would apply

under Policy TC4 in the absence of an up-to-date local threshold. An impact assessment is therefore not required. Nevertheless, the applicant has provided additional expenditure and impact information, and there is no evidence that the proposal would have a significant adverse impact upon planned investment in, or the vitality and viability of, Spalding Town Centre.

The proposal remains in conflict with the qualitative geographical-need requirement of Policy 27(c). However, for the reasons set out above, that requirement is materially inconsistent with the current national decision-making framework and the resulting conflict is afforded very limited weight.

Policy TC3 states that retail development should be refused where it fails the sequential test or is likely to result in a significant adverse impact under Policy TC4. Neither circumstance arises in this case. The proposal is therefore acceptable in retail-policy terms and the previous retail reasons for refusal should not be repeated.

Highway Safety

Policies 2, 3 and 36 and Appendix 6 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan relate to access, highway safety and parking. Policy TR6 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the transport effects of development to be assessed proportionately. Development should be refused where it would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network, including cumulative capacity and congestion effects, or an unacceptable impact on highway safety, taking account of proposed mitigation and any wider network improvements.

The Parish Council and local residents have raised concerns regarding increased traffic, access visibility, parking pressure and highway safety. The previous application was also refused partly because the parking, servicing and access arrangements had not been adequately demonstrated.

The revised proposal would provide 25 parking spaces, including accessible and electric-vehicle spaces, together with motorcycle and cycle parking. Swept-path information demonstrates that servicing vehicles could enter and leave the site in forward gear. Further information has also been submitted demonstrating the width of the access, visibility arrangements and associated kerbing.

Having considered this information, Lincolnshire County Council issued its final response on 5 August 2026 and raised no objection. The Highway Authority acknowledges that parking demand may occasionally exceed the 25 spaces provided. However, having regard to the availability of on-street parking nearby, it concludes that this would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. It also concludes that the development would not result in a severe adverse impact on the transport network.

The concerns raised by the Parish Council and local residents are noted. However, having regard to the revised information and the Highway Authority's final response, the access, parking and servicing arrangements are acceptable. The proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe adverse impact on the transport network and accords with Policies 2, 3 and 36 and Appendix 6 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and Policy TR6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Flood Risk and Drainage

SELLP Policy 4 sets out the Council's approach to development in areas at risk of flooding. It requires development within Flood Zones 2 and 3, or in areas at risk of breach or overtopping, to be supported by an appropriate site-specific Flood Risk Assessment addressing all sources of flooding and the effects of climate change.

Policy F4 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment for development within Flood Zones 2, 3a and 3b. Policies F7 and F8 require development to be safe throughout its lifetime, appropriately flood resistant and resilient, avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere and incorporate proportionate sustainable drainage systems.

The application is supported by a Drainage Impact Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment prepared by GGP Consult, revision P02 dated 2 March 2026. This incorporates and updates the findings of the earlier site-specific Flood Risk Assessment prepared for the residential

redevelopment of the site.

Flood risk

The site is within Flood Zone 3 but benefits from surrounding flood-defence and drainage infrastructure. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment identifies a predicted maximum flood level of approximately 3.10m AOD and recommends a minimum finished floor level of 3.20m AOD. The existing building's ground-floor level is approximately 4.10m AOD and is therefore above the predicted flood level.

The extant permission includes ground-floor residential accommodation, which is classified as "more vulnerable" under Annex F of the NPPF, whereas shops are classified as "less vulnerable". The proposal would therefore reduce the flood-risk vulnerability of the permitted use. Policy F5 confirms that changes of use and small non-residential extensions with a footprint of less than 250m² are not required to undertake the sequential test. Policy F6 further confirms that the exception test does not need to be applied where the sequential test is not required. The proposed change of use and rear extension are therefore not subject to either test.

Subject to conditions securing appropriate finished floor levels, flood-resilient measures and a flood-warning and evacuation procedure, the development would be safe throughout its lifetime and acceptable in flood-risk terms.

Drainage

The proposal would increase the site's impermeable area by approximately 208m². Surface water would be collected and directed to a 92m³ underground attenuation system beneath the parking area before discharging to the eastern boundary watercourse at a restricted rate of 2 litres per second. The submitted hydraulic modelling demonstrates that the system could accommodate the 1-in-100-year rainfall event with a 40% climate-change allowance without above-ground flooding.

The Internal Drainage Board raises no objection in principle, subject to its consent, confirmation of the receiving watercourse's capacity and payment of the applicable contribution. Updated drainage and level information, including kerbing arrangements, provides further detail regarding the containment and management of surface water within the site.

Lincolnshire County Council's combined Highway and Lead Local Flood Authority response dated 5th August 2026 also raises no objection and concludes that the proposal would not increase surface-water flood risk. As this is a minor application, responsibility for assessing the drainage proposals remains with the Local Planning Authority.

The detailed construction, discharge, exceedance and long-term maintenance arrangements can be secured by condition, with any separate consent from the Internal Drainage Board obtained through the relevant statutory process. Subject to these controls, the development would be safe throughout its lifetime, would not increase flood risk elsewhere and would accord with Policy 4 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and Policies F4 to F8 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Environmental Issues/Amenity

SELLP Policy 2 requires development to respect neighbouring amenity, while Policy 30 addresses noise, disturbance, lighting, odour and air quality. Paragraph 198 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires development to be appropriate for its location and for any harmful effects upon health or living conditions to be mitigated.

The site is close to existing homes and the residential development permitted on the wider Bell Inn site. The store would operate between 06:00 and 23:00 daily and would generate customer movements, deliveries, servicing, waste collection, mechanical plant and external lighting.

Operational activity

The lawful use remains as a public house, with no identified restriction on its opening hours. This

provides a relevant baseline because a public house could generate evening and weekend activity. However, the Transport Statement estimates approximately 66.63 two-way vehicle movements during the store's peak hour, compared with 20.88 for the former public-house use.

The retail use would therefore generate more frequent vehicle movements, although customer visits would generally last only 10 to 15 minutes. Conditions controlling opening hours, deliveries, servicing, waste collections and other external activity would limit the effect upon neighbouring residents.

Noise

The Noise Impact Assessment considers customer activity, servicing and fixed plant and concludes that the development can operate without unacceptable effects upon nearby homes. This depends upon the proposed acoustic measures and operational controls being implemented.

Conditions should therefore control the cumulative noise from refrigeration, air-conditioning, extraction and other plant, together with delivery and waste-collection hours. A delivery and servicing management plan should also be required. As the assessment relates specifically to a convenience shop, the permitted use should be restricted to Use Class E(a).

External lighting

The revised Statement of Lighting Design dated 27th May 2026 shows a maximum illumination of 0.43 lux at the nearest residential properties. This is below the relevant limits of 10 lux before curfew and 2 lux after curfew. The proposed lighting would be directed downwards and into the site and would not cause unacceptable light intrusion.

The submitted scheme does not include lighting along the northern side of the site. Any additional lighting should therefore require approval. The main car-park lighting should also be switched off shortly after the store closes, apart from essential security or emergency lighting.

Air quality, odour and waste

The scale of the development and predicted traffic levels would not significantly affect local air quality. The convenience-store use does not include commercial cooking or other activities likely to produce significant odour.

Refuse and recycling would be stored within the enclosure at the rear. Subject to controls over its management and collection hours, this would not cause unacceptable noise, odour or disturbance.

Effect of the physical works

The single-storey rear extension and alterations would not cause an unacceptable loss of privacy, daylight or outlook and would not appear overbearing from neighbouring properties.

Subject to conditions controlling the use, operating hours, deliveries, waste collection, plant noise, lighting and acoustic mitigation, the proposal is acceptable in amenity terms and accords with Policies 2 and 30 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan and the relevant parts National Planning Policy Framework 2026.

Land Contamination

SELLP Policy 30 and Policy P2 of the National Planning Policy Framework require development sites to be suitable for their proposed use, taking account of ground conditions, contamination risks and the extent to which those risks can be mitigated.

The submitted Phase 2 Site Investigation identified a potential ground-gas risk, and further information has subsequently been provided. While the available information is sufficient to indicate that the identified risks are capable of being addressed, it does not provide the level of detail

necessary to establish the final mitigation requirements or allow the matter to be dealt with through a condition requiring simple compliance with the submitted documents.

Environmental Protection initially objected and has not provided a further response to the additional information. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the site cannot be made safe for its intended use. The proposed commercial use is also less sensitive to contamination than the residential use previously permitted.

A staged pre-commencement condition should therefore require any necessary additional investigation and ground-gas monitoring, the submission and approval of a final risk assessment and remediation strategy, implementation of the approved measures and subsequent verification. The condition should also address any unexpected contamination encountered during construction.

Subject to these requirements, the site can be made suitable for its proposed use and the development would accord with SELLP Policy 30 and Policy P2 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecology/Biodiversity Net Gain

SELLP Policy 28 seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment. Criterion 2 relates to nationally and locally designated sites and protected or priority habitats and species, while criterion 3 seeks to conserve and enhance ecological networks and address gaps in habitat connectivity.

Policy N2 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires development to identify opportunities to conserve and enhance the environmental qualities of a site, strengthen ecological networks, conserve existing natural features where possible and minimise adverse effects upon biodiversity. It specifically requires proposals to incorporate features supporting priority or threatened species, including bats. Where significant biodiversity harm cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, permission should be refused. Policy N3 also seeks the conservation and appropriate long-term management of existing trees within development.

Protected Species

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, bat survey report and associated ecological information. The surveys identify at least two bat roosts within the former public house: a non-breeding common pipistrelle day roost and a non-breeding brown long-eared bat roost.

All species of bat and their roosts are legally protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The proposed demolition, extension and alteration works are therefore likely to require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England before the relevant works commence.

Before granting planning permission, the Local Planning Authority must consider whether there is a reasonable prospect of Natural England granting the necessary licence. This requires consideration of the three statutory tests:

1. whether the development is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including reasons of a social or economic nature;
2. whether there is a satisfactory alternative; and
3. whether the action would be detrimental to maintaining the bat populations concerned at a favourable conservation status within their natural range.

The Council's ecologist considers that sufficient survey information has been provided to determine the application and that the three tests are capable of being met, provided the recommended avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are followed. The identified roosts are non-breeding roosts associated with relatively widespread species, and the submitted ecological recommendations provide a basis for retaining appropriate roosting opportunities and maintaining the conservation status of the species concerned.

The proposal would bring a vacant building back into active use and would provide associated social and economic benefits. The development is also constrained by the existing building and its

established location, meaning that avoiding all works affecting the existing roosts would be unlikely to provide a satisfactory means of delivering the proposed development. Subject to detailed mitigation and replacement roosting provision, the proposal would not be expected to prejudice the favourable conservation status of the bat populations concerned. On that basis, there is a reasonable prospect of the necessary licence being granted.

A planning condition would require the submission and approval of a detailed bat mitigation strategy before any demolition, alteration or other works capable of affecting a bat roost commence. The strategy should include the timing and supervision of works, precautionary working methods, replacement roosting provision, sensitive lighting and post-construction monitoring. The applicant would remain separately responsible for obtaining the necessary licence from Natural England before undertaking any licensable activity.

The Preliminary Roost Assessment also identifies two potential roost features within tree T443, although no evidence of occupation was recorded during the survey. The Council's ecologist recommends retaining this tree and incorporating it within the car-park layout. Its retention would avoid the loss of potential roosting habitat, contribute to the ecological network and reduce the development's off-site BNG requirement.

Subject to these measures and the ecological mitigation and enhancement recommendations contained within section 1, pages 3-7 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, the protected-species effects of the development can be satisfactorily mitigated.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The application site measures approximately 1,608m², equivalent to 0.1608 hectares. An exemption from mandatory biodiversity net gain was introduced on 6th August 2026 for new planning applications involving sites of 0.2 hectares or less, provided that onsite priority habitat would not be adversely affected.

Although the development falls below the applicable site-area threshold, the exemption applies only to planning applications made on or after 6 August 2026. This application was submitted before that date. Under the relevant transitional arrangements, applications already submitted continue to be subject to the biodiversity net gain requirements which applied at the time they were made. The application is therefore not exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain.

Consequently, any planning permission would remain subject to the statutory biodiversity gain condition requiring a Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before development commences.

The application is supported by a biodiversity assessment and statutory metric. The Council's ecologist considers that the assessment and calculations are sufficiently robust and that the mandatory 10% net gain can be achieved. However, the required gain cannot be delivered entirely within the application site. On the submitted scheme, approximately 1.14 area-habitat units would need to be secured off site. If tree T443 is retained, the off-site requirement would reduce to approximately 0.95 units.

The necessary off-site provision may be secured through habitat creation or enhancement on other land controlled by the applicant, supported by a planning obligation or conservation covenant, or through the purchase of registered biodiversity units from an approved habitat bank. Before the Biodiversity Gain Plan can be approved, the applicant will need to provide a final statutory metric identifying the off-site habitat parcels and unit references, evidence that the required units have been acquired and allocated to the development, and confirmation that those units have been recorded on the Biodiversity Gain Site Register.

Any significant onsite habitat creation or enhancement would also need to be secured and managed for at least 30 years through an appropriate legal agreement or conservation covenant, together with an approved Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

Subject to the statutory biodiversity gain condition, the necessary off-site provision, retention of tree T443 and conditions securing the ecological mitigation and enhancement measures, the proposal would not result in unacceptable ecological harm and would accord with SELLP Policy 28 and Policies N2 and N3 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Heritage and Design

SELLP Policies 2 and 3 require development to respond appropriately to its surroundings and improve the character and quality of an area. Policy 29 seeks to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. Section 72(1) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Policy DP3 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires development to respond to the history, character and features of its site and setting, including through the appropriate restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets. Policies HE4 and HE5 require heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance and the effects of development upon that significance, including any contribution made by setting, to be properly assessed.

Policy HE6 requires substantial weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Policy HE7 requires a balanced judgement where development would harm a non-designated heritage asset, having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the asset. Policy HE9 relates specifically to development within conservation areas, while Policy HE10 addresses the recording of heritage assets where development would result in the loss of all or part of an asset.

The Bell Inn is a non-designated heritage asset which makes a positive contribution to the Pinchbeck Conservation Area. The proposed works would retain and improve the principal elevation, including the building's established roof form and historic character. The refurbishment and reuse of the building would secure a use consistent with its conservation and would make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These elements of the proposal are supported by the Conservation Officer.

The proposal includes substantial demolition of the existing rear range. Although the applicant's Heritage Statement considers this element to be of limited significance, the Conservation Officer has requested further justification as to why it cannot be retained or adapted. Nevertheless, the rear of the building has previously been altered and is of less significance than the principal range. Its replacement would be single-storey, would broadly reflect the form of the existing addition and would remain subordinate to the original building. On balance, its loss would result in limited harm to the significance of the Bell Inn as a non-designated heritage asset but would not harm the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.

The proposed entrance on the south elevation would be visible within the Conservation Area. Its acceptability would depend upon the quality of its materials and detailing. These matters, together with the portico, window joinery and external materials, can be secured through conditions. A historic building record should also be completed before works commence, in accordance with Policy HE10, and the existing hanging sign on the west elevation should be retained. Any new advertisement signage would be considered separately under the advertisement consent regime.

The site also lies within the setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and several Grade II listed buildings on Church Street and Church Walk. Having given special regard to the desirability of preserving their settings, the scale and position of the rear extension, the retention of the principal building and the existing pattern of intervening development mean that the proposal would not harm the significance of these listed buildings through development within their settings.

The Historic Places Team considers that, given the nature and limited ground impact of the development, significant archaeological remains are unlikely to be affected and no further archaeological investigation is required.

Having given substantial weight to the conservation of the designated heritage assets and undertaken the balanced judgement required in relation to the Bell Inn as a non-designated heritage asset, the limited harm arising from the rear demolition would be outweighed by the benefits of securing the beneficial reuse, repair and long-term future of the vacant building and improving its principal elevation.

Subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal would preserve the settings of the nearby

listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Pinchbeck Conservation Area. It would accord with SELLP Policies 2, 3 and 29 and Policies DP3, HE4, HE5, HE6, HE7, HE9 and HE10 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Residential Amenity

SELLP Policy 2 requires development to provide an acceptable relationship with neighbouring land uses and to avoid unacceptable effects upon residential amenity.

The proposed rear extension would be single-storey and modest in height and scale. Having regard to its siting and the existing built form, it would not result in an unacceptable loss of daylight or outlook or appear overbearing when viewed from neighbouring properties. The development would not introduce elevated windows or other features giving rise to a material loss of privacy or overlooking.

The proposed parking, servicing and plant areas are located close to residential properties and to the residential development permitted on the wider former Bell Inn site. Their operational effects are considered separately under Environmental Issues/Amenity and can be controlled through conditions relating to opening and delivery hours, plant noise, lighting and waste collection.

Subject to those controls, the proposal would provide an acceptable physical and operational relationship with neighbouring occupiers and would accord with SELLP Policy 2.

Planning Balance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration of critical importance. Annex A states that development plan policies, or parts of them, which are materially inconsistent with the national decision-making policies should be given very limited weight.

The proposal would bring a vacant and prominent former public house back into active use, secure the refurbishment and long-term future of the principal building, provide local employment and investment, and increase access to convenience goods. Whilst planning permission H14-0219-22 has been implemented through the wider residential development of the site, no conversion works have been undertaken to the Bell Inn building itself. The former public house therefore remains vacant and largely unchanged. The current proposal would secure the active reuse and refurbishment of the principal building, delivering a viable and deliverable use for a prominent vacant asset which has otherwise remained unused notwithstanding the extant permission. Policy L2 requires substantial weight to be given to the benefits of making better use of vacant and underutilised land and buildings. Substantial weight is also given to the economic benefits of the commercial development in accordance with Policy E2.

The revised submission and subsequent technical information have overcome the previous sequential, access, parking, servicing and drainage concerns. Lincolnshire County Council raises no objection on highway or surface-water grounds. Matters relating to flood risk, drainage, residential amenity, contamination, ecology, biodiversity net gain, heritage and design are acceptable or can be addressed through conditions and the relevant statutory processes. The limited heritage harm associated with the rear demolition is outweighed by the benefits of securing the reuse, repair and improvement of the vacant building.

The proposed store remains in conflict with Policy 27(c) because it exceeds 100sqm net floorspace and a qualitative need arising from a geographical deficiency has not been demonstrated. However, this requirement is materially inconsistent with the current national decision-making framework, which addresses out-of-centre retail development through the sequential and impact tests. The conflict with Policy 27(c) is consequently afforded very limited weight.

Policies S3 and S4 establish a presumption in favour of sustainable development and state that development within settlements should be approved unless its benefits would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies. The proposal satisfies the relevant national retail policies and no adverse effects have been identified which, individually or cumulatively, would substantially outweigh its benefits.

Although the proposal is contrary to Policy 27(c), that limited conflict does not outweigh the substantial benefits of bringing the vacant building back into productive use, securing its refurbishment and long-term maintenance, and supporting commercial investment within the settlement. The current National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration which indicates that planning permission should be granted notwithstanding the identified development plan conflict.

Conclusion

The proposal is acceptable in respect of its principle, the sequential approach, retail impact, highway safety, parking and servicing, flood risk and drainage, residential amenity, contamination, ecology, biodiversity net gain, heritage and design, subject to appropriate conditions and the relevant statutory requirements.

The proposal remains contrary to the qualitative geographical-need requirement of Policy 27(c). However, that conflict is afforded very limited weight because the requirement is materially inconsistent with the current national decision-making framework. The proposal satisfies Policies TC3 and TC4, while substantial weight is given under Policies E2 and L2 to its economic benefits and the beneficial reuse of the vacant building.

Applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development established by Policies S3 and S4, the benefits of the proposal are not substantially outweighed by any identified adverse effects. Material considerations therefore indicate that planning permission should be granted notwithstanding the limited conflict with Policy 27(c).

Additional Considerations

Public Sector Equality Duty

In making this decision the Authority must have regard to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under s.149 of the Equalities Act. This means that the Council must have due regard to the need (in discharging its functions) to:

A. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act

B. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may include removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the special needs of those with a protected characteristic; encouraging participation in public life (or other areas where they are underrepresented) of people with a protected characteristic(s).

C. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The PSED must be considered as a relevant factor in making this decision but does not impose a duty to achieve the outcomes in s.149. It is only one factor that needs to be considered, and may be balanced against other relevant factors.

It is NOT considered that the recommendation in this case will have a disproportionately adverse impact on a protected characteristic.

Human Rights

In making a decision, the Authority should be aware of and take into account any implications that may arise from the Human Rights Act 1998. Under the Act, it is unlawful for a public authority such as South Holland District Council to act in a manner that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Authority is referred specifically to Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property).

It is NOT considered that the recommendation in this case interferes with local residents' right to

respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence, except insofar as it is necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others (in this case, the rights of the applicant). The Council is also permitted to control the use of property in accordance with the general public interest and the recommendation is considered to be a proportionate response to the submitted application based on the considerations set out in this report.