

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 APPEAL UNDER SECTION 78

Site Address:	Site of Former Colville County Primary School, Church Lane, Newton-in-the-Isle, Cambridgeshire
Description of development:	Erection of 34no sheltered retirement apartments with retail unit (outline application with matters committed in respect of access and layout)
Application reference:	F/YR18/1120/O
Appeal reference:	APP/D0515/W/19/3230632

REPRESENTATION BY NEWTON-IN-THE-ISLE PARISH COUNCIL

The opinion of the members of the Parish Council is as follows:

The scale of the proposed development is way beyond the natural capacity of the site. The physical mass of the building would make it second only to our parish church as the largest non-agricultural building in the parish. It is of a scale and bulk that would be incongruous in a village setting. The unbroken facade of the proposed development is a typical feature of an urban streetscape, but is completely at odds with the *ad hoc* character of traditional Fenland villages, built up over several hundred years. If fully occupied, this single development would increase the population of the village by more than 12%.

Newton-in-the-Isle is the smallest parish in Fenland and the village lacks all basic amenities. There is no school, pub, or shop. No medical facilities or leisure provision. There is a parish church and a small village hall, which currently hosts a post office counter service for two hours each week. A County Council subsidised bus service connects the village to neighbouring villages and to the town of Wisbech, approximately 4½ miles away. This service has been under review for several years and at present there is no funding in place for it beyond March 2020.

There is no evidence of need for private retirement accommodation in Newton-in-the-Isle or surrounding villages. The village is well provided with single storey properties, with almost 100 bungalows amongst the 250 dwellings within the village curtilage and many others elsewhere in the parish. Anecdotally, the Parish Council is of the opinion that there may be a shortfall of up to 6 retirement dwellings in the social housing sector, but this demand remains unproven.

In summary, the Parish Council considers that this is an urban development being shoehorned into a village setting in a manner that is totally inappropriate for the location. The demand for such a development is unproven and the site lends itself to modest residential provision typical of countless other infill sites in Fenland villages. During three public consultation events regarding this proposal, more than one hundred residents expressed either strong reservations or outright opposition to the plan, with no discernible support being voiced by anybody. After thirty years as a derelict eyesore in the heart of the village, the Parish Council is keen to work with the owner of the site to identify a satisfactory solution that meets local needs and is acceptable to the local community, but this proposal falls well short of expectations.