

Covering Letter to the Advisory Panel Sunday 5th April 2020
From Glebe Meadow Westleton CIC Ltd

Westleton and its vicinity has a high proportion of older residents, both retirees and people who have lived here all their lives. While still well enough to be living independently, a significant number of people gradually come to feel that their properties are no longer right for them. In general, they are seeking homes & gardens better designed and scaled for their convenience and comfort as older people, with proximity to services and the supportive community of immediate neighbours. Because specific provision is lacking locally, some have to move away, sacrificing their connections here and impoverishing the social fabric. Others choose to stay but feel increasingly isolated and lonely as their mobility diminishes.

A few years ago, the then vicar's wife and Parish Nurse, Linda Ginn, saw and felt the need, recognising that a scheme based around the Vicarage, in the centre of Westleton, would provide the perfect setting for a solution to this underlying community issue. When the Vicarage became redundant, a group of us from Westleton formed Glebe Meadow CIC, to try to make of this a reality.

In the village the point of the project has been immediately understood, and welcomed as a social good, by virtually everyone. Westleton Parish Council are unanimously in favour of it, the Parish Councils of the other villages in the benefice have all encouraged us as has our local MP, Therese Coffey, and Suffolk County Council - who lent us a significant sum to cover start-up costs - and the Diocese has fully supported the development of this plan since it was first discussed with them in 2016.

Our prime aim has been to provide optimum life-enhancing conditions for residents. The scheme provides age appropriate, well-appointed, cost effective, manageable warm homes in a delightful setting. The Vicarage will be the social hub for residents, with an explicit cohousing ethos where neighbours actively look out for one

another, and with all the amenities of the village within yards of the entrance. This will contribute to longer, healthy, active lives, and less pressure on health and social services.

This could serve as a model to be adapted for other rural communities where loneliness and isolation are issues. It is much more than just another housing development. It is unique as there are presently no other rural senior cohousing schemes in the UK. It brings together the present and growing issue of an older population, a large and under-utilised property, and the vision of local people who have the backing of their community.