



## Planning Advisory Panel North (7 April 2020)

### Item 6 – DC/19/2839/FUL - Application for 20 new dwellings and change of use of one existing dwelling (The Vicarage) into a communal social hub at Glebe Meadow, Darsham Road, Westeton

**DC/19/2839/FUL**

**Application for 20 new dwellings and change of use of one existing dwelling (The Vicarage) into a communal social hub at Glebe Meadow, Darsham Road, Westeton**

**Area Team:** South  
**Case Officer** Liz Beighton

**The application is at the Planning Advisory Panel because the 'Minded to' decision of the Planning Officer is contrary to the Westleton Parish Council recommendation to support the application.**

#### Westleton Parish Council

##### **STATEMENT OF SUPPORT**

Dear Mr Perkin

The Parish Council have recently sent in a response to the consultation on this planning application to formally register/confirm that we have no objections to the proposal.

When our Planning sub-committee met earlier this month they concluded that the design is good and the site is well contained within the curtilage of the old Vicarage and screened by mature trees.

We recognize, that a lot of work by the applicants has gone into this project and the type of accommodation will be very beneficial for Westleton and a useful asset to the area, as well as providing much needed age appropriate accommodation for local people.

We trust that you will therefore take these comments into account in determining the application.

Please note that the Parish Council have also set out support towards the development in our submission (attached for your information) which has been made in relation to the District Council's Draft Local Plan Hearing which commences on Thursday.

We have additionally sent a copy of this email to Norman Brooks our local District Councillor and also to Cllr Paul Ashdown (Chairman of Planning North Cttee).

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Ian Haines  
 Westleton Parish Clerk

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Westleton Parish Council also submitted a copy of their most recent representations to the Local Plan process. A copy of that representation is included as Appendix 1.

**Ward Members (Cllr Brooks)**

no comments received

**Statutory Consultees:**

Historic England – please see appended response raising concerns to both the harm to the setting of heritage assets namely the conservation area and St Peters Church (Attached as Appendix 2)

SCC Archaeology – recommend conditions

Natural England – reference made to RAMS mitigation

Suffolk Wildlife Trust – object on insufficient information regarding compensation of loss to protected habitats

ESC Head of Environmental Services – recommend conditions

SCC Flooding – objection on grounds of insufficient information to confirm that there is a suitable drainage strategy

**Non- Statutory Consultees**

Suffolk Preservation Society – raise concerns over the impact to heritage assets

**Third Party Consultees**

There have been 9 representations of Objection received raising the following material planning considerations:

- Principle:
  - o This is inappropriate development, and the principle is contrary to planning policy as part of the site is outside the village boundary.
  - o During the public consultation 3 years ago in relation to the village boundary there was broad support for the land to be outside the boundary.
- Visual Amenity and Historic Environment
  - o The proposal is inappropriate in a Conservation Area.
  - o Believe that they are trying to get too many dwellings on this site, resulting in cramming within the site and properties being close to the existing neighbouring dwellings.

- An estate of 20 modern houses crammed into a small plot of ancient land next to a thatched medieval church is completely inappropriate, and fail to complement the character of the area.
- Landscape Impact – the buildings would be clearly visible across the field from Wash Lane and the roads from Yoxford and Darsham.
- The proposed houses would be higher than the cottages in Darsham Road and overshadow the adjacent Listed church.
- Loss of Open Space and resulting harm to the character of the area,
- This would be an over development of the site.
- The archaeological investigations are incomplete.
- According to the results of a recent Archaeological survey, a Bronze Age cremation site was discovered within the Glebe land. This highlights the historical significance of the site which is adjacent to the churchyard where a Bronze Age urn was previously discovered. Also aware of archaeological deposits of other ages being found in the locality.
- Ecology
  - The development would be harmful to protected species on the site, and an offence would be likely if the construction proceeded. The surveyors confirmed that a large population of slow worms inhabits the site, that eDNA results for newts were positive and that bats were active in the area. Many other species have been recorded in the area.
  - Plans to remove the trees and hedgerows, and replace them with hedgerow are eco vandalism. They would result in a loss of habitat.
  - Concerns about the impact of external lighting upon ecology.
- Social and community impacts
  - The creation of the vicarage as a social centre for the development will create an inward looking community within the village, which is at odds with the money recently spent on the village hall to create a social hub for the village.
  - Many older people live independently from choice with networks from within their very close neighbourhood. Putting them together in one site in one village which is not disability enabled is unnatural and will place the burden of care on a few and lead to increased social isolation.
- Housing Tenure
  - The proposals would not be affordable. Believe the development is aimed at wealth able bodied individuals, when the real need is for sheltered accommodation and low cost housing aimed at young families and elderly people who may require assisted living. The

- proposed demographic appears to be the people who can generally afford the accommodation that is already available.
- Dismayed that only a small percentage of these buildings would be available for social housing. 80-85% would be open market, far in excess of the third permitted by policy.
  - Believe the homes that may be vacated by those downsizing to this development, would not be bought by local families and workers but by families and older people planning to retire here as second homes.
  - Question the need for these homes, and the suitability of the housing needs survey, as it focused on collecting view on the concept of co-housing and potential future needs for elderly people with a response rate of only 26% (114 out of 424 questionnaires) not being a fair representation of endorsement from the local community. Also suggest the questions asked were leading.
  - Highway Safety and Parking
    - The road is narrow, so there are concerns regarding the additional traffic and parking requirements.
    - Parking and driving on this small road with no pavements has been a long term problem. Many occupiers would have two cars and support traffic of family, cleaners, gardeners, home delivery trucks, events at the church and village hall, the pubs, will be chaotic and dangerous.
    - The developers have withdrawn their invitation to the parish council to collaborate on parking on the proposed site.
  - Residential Amenity
    - There would be a loss of privacy to adjacent properties through direct views from the scheme into their gardens.
    - Concern there would be a loss of light to adjoining properties.
    - There would be increased noise and other pollution from traffic within the site to the rear of existing dwellings.
    - Concerns about the impact of external lighting upon the existing neighbours.
    - Concerns about the position of bins and a proposed ground source heat pump in relation to the boundary with the neighbours, resulting in noise and vibration and foul smells.
  - Other matters
    - There is a need for clear transparency in terms of the funding and profits. There are no details on how this scheme would actually work in practice, and no mention was made of the high annual service charges covering the cost of running extensive communal services.

- The buildings are not bungalows as suggested in the Design and Access Statement , as they would have accommodation on more than one floor with stairs.
- The scheme will introduce urbanisation, noise, light and traffic exhaust pollution.
- Suggest that anyone interested in investing in the scheme must be a 'high net worth' individual ("net incomes in excess of £100k pa, or net assets in excess of £250k beyond your pension fund assets and your main private residence").
- Foul sewage is already under strain.
- Alternative sites in Westleton have already being identified by the Local Authority, which proposed via policies in the new local plan which include a requirement for dwellings to meet the needs of older people.

The above representations of objection also raise a number of items that are not material to the determination of the application and therefore can not be considered in the determination of the application. These include the consultation process of Westleton Parish Council with the community, and the suggestion that the applicants have sent emails to those in the village pleading for people to support the scheme.

There have been 35 representations of Support (including from the land owner, the County Councillor and members of the Community Interest Company who have submitted the application) received raising the following material planning considerations:

- Visual Amenity and Historic Environment
  - The site is a private long neglected garden, therefore concerns regarding open space and conservation are misplaced.
  - Believe the buildings, whilst modern would be a counterpoint to the existing architecture and therefore would not be detrimental to the visual aesthetics of the church, churchyard or audibly. The noise impacts from the elderly residents will surely be minimal. The area is well wooded with existing mature vegetation between the site and the church.
  - Once established the homes will fit in well, echoing the groups of housing along various lanes in the village. The houses are sensitively designed and the proposal shows good use of the area around them for green spaces, recreation and wildlife.
- Social and community Impacts

- There would be social/community benefits of enabling older people to stay connected with their friends and the community, helping the village to develop its already strong sense of community. The vicarage would provide a hub for community activity, helping to reduce social isolation and give a good quality of life.
- The site is close to the heart of the village, with easy access to the church, the village hall, the shop, the bookshops, the pubs, and the green.
- Believe the residents of co-housing schemes remain healthier longer putting less pressure on health services, and such schemes have inbuilt social care reducing intervention from local authorities.
- Housing Tenure
  - The 1.5 storey dwellings will be suitable for those with limited mobility.
  - There is a great need for this specialist housing in the area as all other housing plans are to benefit all including those wishing to buy as second homes or holiday lets.
  - It would provide age appropriate bungalows for older local people, with intrinsic social support in the form of a co-housing community. Recent housing surveys have shown that there is an urgent need for the provision of age appropriate accommodation for older people. It is proposed that the purchase of the homes would be limited to people who live in the district and are over 65. The homes would alleviate concerns of older people such as security, emergency assistance and transport.
  - It will bring affordable and social housing to the village.
  - Believe this will free up other homes in the area which could be taken up by younger people and families, as older people downsize.
  - It will enable people who have left Westleton for work or other reasons to return to the village of their childhood in their old age.
- Housing Construction
  - The homes would be physically efficient, and low maintenance. They would be constructed using sustainable materials, to 85% passive house standards, with extensive roof areas of Solar PV.
- Highway Safety and Parking
- Other Matters.
  - Acknowledge that there would be disruption during the construction phase, and visual imposition upon neighbours and the loss of current wildlife.
  - Acknowledge that not everyone will be able to afford the new homes.
  - Believe if this scheme is refused, the village would be less able to resist the proposed allocation to the southern side of the village.

The above representations of support also raise a number of items that are not material to the determination of the application and therefore can not be considered in the determination of the application. These include the length of time those commenting on the application have lived in the village/area and the characters of the applicants.

### **Officer comments**

#### **The Case Against the Development**

Whilst the sentiment of the applicant is laudable, officers are firmly of the view that the site selected for the proposed development is unacceptable and alternative locations should be explored which do not yield the level of harm identified.

The following issues are in the officer's mind significant and would be suggested reasons for refusal:

1. Harm to designated heritage assets of St Peter's Church and Lavender Cottage
2. Loss of important open space identified in the CA appraisal and the resulting harm to the defined heritage asset
3. The site is located outside the settlement boundary and does not meet the exceptions to allow housing identified in para 79 of the NPPF or Policy DM3 of the Local Plan.
4. Insufficient information has been provided to satisfy the Local Lead Flood Authority that suitable drainage of the site can be achieved
5. Objection from the Councils Arboriculturist over the future pressure to fell trees
6. The scheme represents poor layout and design which does not respect its setting or character of the area and is contrary to design guidance in the NPPF
7. There is no suitable mechanism through an appropriate legal agreement to ensure that the dwellings remain for local people (as was the intention) and as such, with the very open cascade proposed, amount to new market dwelling. No affordable housing is proposed on grounds of viability. As such there is no public benefit arising from this development.
8. Inappropriate mix of housing to satisfy Policy SP3 of the Local Plan.

It is important to note that detailed pre-application guidance was provided to the applicants following a site inspection. The formal advise raised a number of key concerns. Unfortunately despite such significant concerns an application was submitted with limited deviation and therefore the concerns of officers remains and is consistent with that previously provided.

Officers acknowledge the intention and ambition of the CIC and would be amenable to working with the team in terms of finding a suitable site in the district / area to realise these ambitions. An alternative would be for the CIC to investigate one of the allocated sites to proceed with this development which are sites considered suitable for this level of development to the council.

The limited benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the significant harms identified to the proposal, most importantly impact on heritage assets and being contrary to the existing and emerging local plan (and NPPF). The harms are supported not just by officers but also statutory consultees who hold expertise in such matters.

### Site Description

The application site lies partly in and partly outside the defined settlement boundary of Westleton as defined in the Local Plan (2013). The emerging local plan, which has been through examination and consultation with the Parish Council does not propose to alter the settlement boundary therefore resulting in the site remaining outside the boundary. Two sites have been identified for residential development (SPLP12.70 and SCLP12.69) which between them would deliver approximately 35 dwellings.

The whole of the site is located within the Conservation Area (June 2010) and the whole of the site is identified as an important open/green/tree space.

The site forms the setting of two heritage assets – St Peter's Church (Grade 2\*) and Lavender Cottage (Grade 2).

### Proposals

The application is for 20 new dwellings and the change of use of the existing dwelling to provide a communal social hub.

According to the Housing Policy Statement submitted with the application, the scheme would provide 20 two bedroom dwellings which are described as being self-build properties. The Design and Access Statement states that the dwellings will all be wheelchair accessible at ground floor level and would be targeted to the over 65s as a co-housing scheme.

### Planning Policy

S38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act states that decisions should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

S66(1) Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

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## National Planning Policy Framework 2019

### Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2013)

- Policy SP3 – New Homes
- Policy SP19 – Settlement Policy
- Policy SP27 – Key Service Centres
- Policy DM3 – Housing in the Countryside

### Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document (2017)

- SSP2 – Physical Limits Boundaries

### Emerging Local Plan

- Policy SCLP3.2 – Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy SCLP3.3 – Settlement Boundaries
- Policy SCLP5.2 – Housing Development in Small Villages
- Policy SCLP5.3 – Housing in the Countryside
- Policy SCLP5.8 – Housing Mix

There is no relevant Neighbourhood Plan covering Westleton.

## **Planning Considerations**

### Planning Policy

Within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2013), Westleton is identified as a Key Service Centre under Policy SP19 'Settlement Policy'. Policy SP27 'Key and Local Service Centres' sets out the overarching approach towards development within Key Service Centres. In relation to new housing development criterion b states that housing development would be permitted within defined physical limits or in the form of small allocations of a scale appropriate to the size, location and characteristics of the particular community. Physical Limits are identified within the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document Policy SSP2 'Physical Limits Boundaries'. The Policies Map for Westleton (in Appendix 6a) defines the Physical Limits Boundary, which identifies that the eastern part of the application site is within the Physical Limits whilst the western part (which would accommodate 15 of the proposed dwellings) is outside. In the context of Policy SP27, the site is not identified as an allocation. It is therefore relevant to consider policy related to housing development in the countryside.

Policy DM3 'Housing in the Countryside' of the 2013 Core Strategy sets out the circumstances under which housing development within the countryside would be supported in principle, which is relevant as part of the site is outside of the Physical

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Limits and is therefore within the countryside. Policy DM3 sets out a framework under which proposals for replacement dwellings, sub-division, conversions and minor infilling within clusters of dwellings would be supported in principle. The proposal is not considered represent any of these. Policy DM3 also sets out support for affordable housing on 'exception' sites, however as the application is not for affordable housing it would not fall within the type of development supported. Policy DM3 also provides support in principle for development which would otherwise accord with the special circumstances outlined in Paragraph 55 of the NPPF. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF has subsequently been replaced by the equivalent paragraph 79 in the current 2019 NPPF. The proposal is not considered to represent any of the circumstances set out under paragraph 79.

Policy SP3 'New Homes' of the 2013 Core Strategy states that the strategy will be to increase the stock of housing to provide for a full range of size, type and tenure of accommodation to meet the needs of the existing and future population. The Policy goes on to state that this includes providing housing that will encourage and enable younger people to remain in the district, but also addresses the needs of what is a currently ageing population. Paragraph 3.49 explains that the general starting point will be that housing developments of 5 or more units would be expected to provide a mix of house types and tenures. Notwithstanding that the principle of the proposal would be contrary to policy in this location, in this context it is noted that the application proposes 20 two bedroom dwellings, rather than a mix as expected by the policy.

Under Policy DM2 'Affordable Housing on Residential Sites', and later revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of thresholds for provision of affordable housing, a development of ten dwellings or more would be expected to provide 1 in 3 units as affordable units on-site. It is noted that an Economic Viability Assessment has been submitted which concludes that provision of affordable housing would not be viable, however it is expected that this will be assessed in determining the application. Notwithstanding that the principle of the proposal would be contrary to policy in this location, the lack of affordable housing would represent a conflict with policy DM2.

The emerging Suffolk Coastal Local Plan has reached an advanced stage of its preparation, with the Final Draft Local Plan (January 2019) having been submitted for Examination in March 2019. The Examination is currently underway with hearing sessions having recently been carried out in August and September 2019. In this respect it should be noted that the weight to be attached to the emerging policies is reduced due to outstanding representations.

Within the emerging Local Plan, Westleton is identified as a Small Village (Policy SCLP3.2 'Settlement Hierarchy'). The strategy for the new Local Plan (set out under Policy SCLP3.1 'Strategy for Growth in Suffolk Coastal District') includes for

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appropriate growth in rural areas that will help to support and sustain existing communities. The Council has sought to allocate appropriate sites in Large Villages and Small Villages to take forward this element of the strategy and to contribute towards meeting the housing need for the district over the plan period.

Policy SCLP3.3 of the Final Draft Local Plan sets out that Settlement Boundaries are defined on the Policies Map and that land outside of Settlement Boundaries is defined as Countryside. Whilst there are outstanding representations to this Policy, which would reduce the amount of weight that can be applied currently (albeit that these do not relate specifically to Westleton), on the Policies Map the Settlement Boundary for Westleton remains as in the Site Allocations and Areas Specific Policies (2017) in relation to the land covered by this site, which would remain partly within and partly outside of the Settlement Boundary.

Policy SCLP5.3 'Housing Development in the Countryside' of the Final Draft Local Plan sets out the circumstances under which housing development outside of Settlement Boundaries would be supported in principle. The proposal is not considered to represent any of the circumstances presented by Policy SCLP5.3. Similar to adopted Policy DM3, the policy refers to the circumstances set out in the NPPF, which have been discussed above.

The emerging Local Plan has been informed by a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which identifies the needs for housing to meet the needs of different groups. This sits within the context of the NPPF paragraph 61 which sets out the groups that should be reflected in needs assessments and planning policies. The conclusions of the SHMA are described in the supporting text to Policy SCLP5.8 'Housing Mix' in the Final Draft Local Plan. The supporting text to Policy SCLP5.8 recognises that there is a need to ensure that the right size, type and tenure mix of housing is delivered, including to meet the needs of older people. Policy SCLP5.8 states that proposals for 5 or more dwellings should provide for a mix of housing based upon the outputs of the SHMA set out in table 5.1, and should provide at least 40% as one or two bedroom units. For proposals of ten or more dwellings, at least 50% of dwellings should meet the requirements for accessible and adaptable dwellings under Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations. The policy also sets out support for sheltered and extra care housing where this incorporates a mix of tenures and sizes to meet an identified need. The above policy would apply alongside policies related to the principle of housing as described above, and would provide opportunities for housing to meet the needs of older people to be provided through the delivery of the Local Plan.

The emerging Local Plan also includes Policy SCLP5.9 'Self Build and Custom Build Housing' which sets out support for self-build and custom build dwellings where these are in compliance with other policies in the Plan. Whilst it is not clear through the documentation submitted how the proposals would be constructed as self-build

units, this policy would need to be viewed in the context of the proposal being contrary to other policies related to the principle of housing development.

Whilst not directly relevant to the consideration of this application, the Final Draft Local Plan sets out two allocations for Westleton, under Policy SCLP12.69 'Land West of the B1125', Westleton and Policy SCLP12.70 'Land at Cherry Lee, Darsham Road, Westleton'.

These allocations are for the delivery of approximately 20 and 15 dwellings, respectively. Criterion a) of Policy SCLP12.69 would expect that development would provide a mix of dwellings to include dwellings to meet the needs of older people, and both allocations would be expected to comply with Policy SCLP5.8 'Housing Mix'. There are outstanding representations related to these allocations, which would limit the amount of weight which can be attached to them, under paragraph 48 of the NPPF and some of these representations refer to the potential for the site subject to this application to come forward and associated cumulative impacts of growth. In this respect it should be noted that the Inspector conducting the Examination has stated that he will not be considering the merits or otherwise of 'omission sites' (as set out in his Guidance Note) and that, for information, the site subject of this application has not specifically been promoted for allocation through the Local Plan process.

The applicant has stated in their submitted Design and Access Statement that the site is a more popular local option than the site situated on the southern edge of the village (SCLP12.69) which is also outside the settlement boundary and currently used for agricultural purposes. There is no evidence to support this claim, notwithstanding such, it is important to note that the 12.69 site is proposed for allocation.

In terms of the policy position the proposal would be contrary to both adopted and emerging planning policy through representing development of housing in the countryside that does not accord with adopted or emerging policy or with the National Planning Policy Framework, as set out above. The adopted and emerging Local Plans set out policies and allocations to meet District wide needs for housing, and the Council can demonstrate a 7.03 year supply of land for housing (for the former Suffolk Coastal district area) as set out in the Statement of Housing Land Supply (August 2019). The Council's planning policy team have reviewed the application and have raised these objections.

It is further noted, notwithstanding that the principle of the proposal is contrary to policy, that the mix of housing proposed does not meet the requirements of adopted Policy SP3 'New Homes' (or emerging Policy SCLP5.8 'Housing Mix') in that it doesn't provide a mix of house types, noting that all the proposed units would be two bedroom. Further, the proposal does not meet the requirements of Policy DM2

'Affordable Housing on Residential Development' (or emerging policy SCLP5.10) in that no affordable housing provision is proposed as part of the development. It should be noted that this response has focused on the principle of the proposed development and the provisions of housing policies in this respect, and does not provide comment beyond these policies.

### Heritage Considerations

The Vicarage grounds are described as an important green, open treed space in the Conservation Area Appraisal and all three elements of this description will be markedly compromised with both direct loss and potential embedded tree damage.

This proposal will bring the developed edge of the village adjacent to open countryside with the only suggested visual impact mitigation in the form of a hedge to be kept at 1m. height along the western site boundary. This is a sensitive edge to the settlement as it fronts open countryside that slopes away down to Wash Lane which is a public right of way.

Unless adequate mitigation for these anticipated impacts can be demonstrated, there is an objection to landscape character and harm and loss of trees.

The application site forms the grounds of the Grade 2\* listed church and is also within the Conservation Area. Historic England (HE) advise that developing the site would remove this open area, occupy the historic setting of the vicarage and introduce new building which would be visible from the churchyard in the winter and in views of the church at the village edge. HE consider that developing the site has the potential to harm the historic significance of both church and conservation area and would not preserve those elements of setting that make a positive contribution to the heritage assets and better reveal their significance in terms of paragraph 193 of the NPPF. The council has therefore weighed up the public benefits of the proposal as the NPPF requires, but given the other significant harms identified with the proposal, remain of the view that the harm identified to the heritage assets is not outweighed by any limited benefit. You will note that HE raise concerns over the application.

The former vicarage is identified as a building that makes a positive contribution to the Westleton conservation area in our adopted appraisal (revised 2019). The appraisal suggests that the two-storey building is likely of two phases which has credence – in our view, C18th and C19th. The building contributes importantly to the village due to its historical connection to the parish church and its attractive architectural attributes which include its 'composition of contrasts', as the appraisal puts it, its reasonable scale and the Italianate character of the later phase. It has no identified designer.

The vicarage garden as its surroundings do contribute importantly to the significance of the vicarage and this will be substantially altered by the current proposal and to

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its detriment. The repurposing of the vicarage as a kind of 'common house', as styled in the application, that includes communal facilities, residents' guest's accommodation and manager's rooms is appropriate and will facilitate the repair of the building which is welcome. The proposed layout will better reveal the significance of the vicarage by facilitating public views to it from Darsham Road and this is welcome.

The proposal will cause less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset that is the Westleton conservation area. That is because the area of land proposed for development is identified in our adopted conservation area appraisal as Important Open/Green/Tree Space i.e. the vicarage gardens and the glebe land. This means that the space makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area in its undeveloped form. The gardens also form an important open space within this part of the village when considered in conjunction with the churchyard to St Peter's.

Development, in principle, will undermine that contribution and cause harm to the conservation area. The principle of development in this regard is therefore unacceptable.

This application will fail the statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the Westleton conservation area; and will cause less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset that is the Westleton conservation area. The test at paragraph 196 of the NPPF is duly engaged and we do not believe, as stated previously, that the public benefits of the proposal against the less than substantial harm.

The total loss of the historic glebe land and setting to the vicarage will result in harm to the significance of the church from development within its setting. The seasonal screening between the vicarage site and the churchyard will offer inadequate visual mitigation between the site albeit that the site layout intentionally places the open space adjacent the boundary with the churchyard to retain some degree of visual and spatial continuity.

The built form will come close to this boundary in two places partly consisting of residential gardens and I do question whether the impact of residential activities including garden use and vehicle noise will adversely impact on the peaceful experience of the churchyard that can presently be enjoyed, to its detriment.

The proposal will fail the statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings; and will cause less than substantial harm to the significance of St Peter's Church. The test at paragraph 196 of the NPPF is duly engaged and you will need to weigh the public benefits of the proposal against the less than substantial harm.

The NPPF at paragraph 193 states that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset (this applies to the conservation area and the listed church), great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset – the church is listed at Grade II\* and is within the top 8% of all listed buildings – the greater the weight should be. Paragraph 194 goes on to state that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Further, paragraph 200 states that LPAs should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably. In our view, the converse, therefore, applies, and the harm caused to the significance of the church by the development of 20 new dwellings within that part of the setting – the Vicarage garden and glebe land – that makes a positive contribution to the church should be resisted.

### Ecological Matters

The site supports a range of protected and/or UK priority species. The scheme will result in the loss of the majority of the habitats that support these species. Appropriate mitigation will therefore be required. The Council's ecologist has accepted the conclusion of the surveys and proposes appropriate conditions.

It is however noted that the RAMS contribution has been received. This does not overcome the on-site harm resulting and mitigation required to alleviate any harm.

### Landscape and Arboriculture

In September of 2019 the Council's Landscape and Arboricultural Manager responded to the initial version of the tree survey as follows:

*"In respect of this application, I was also in attendance at the pre-application site visit with our colleagues Katherine Scott and Robert Scrimgeour, and on that occasion I had the opportunity to assess the site and understand its existing tree and hedge cover, and its place in the local landscape. Having now reviewed the application details including the submitted tree survey, I must advise you that I have some notable concerns regarding impacts arising on existing tree cover, together with other landscape character related issues. In summary my concerns are:*

*\* As a point of detail the tree survey states that the site is not in a Conservation Area, which of course it is so all trees over 75mm. DBH are protected by virtue of Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act unless their notified removal is accepted by the local planning authority. A number of trees are proposed for removal as part of this proposal.*

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\* *The submitted tree report schedule of trees appears to be partially missing from the documents I have access to in so far as the shown schedule stops at T39 and the tree plan shows T numbers exceeding 50 together with hedges and groups. A full understanding of the detail will not be possible without all the required information.*

\* *A total of 23 trees are shown for removal which is almost half the tree stock on or immediately adjacent to the site. This includes the major mature Lime that currently stands close to the rear of the Vicarage. I will accept that it is not in an ideal juxtaposition with the building, and it is also close to the fine mature Plane tree and it could be argued that there may not be room for both to exist so close to each other in future years. A further 16 trees are described as being affected by the proposal although this assessment was based on an early site layout that has now been superseded. Working off the current layout plan, it is clear that a number of key trees, whilst shown for retention, will directly affected by surrounding development within their anticipated root zones and in the absence of any arboricultural implications and mitigation information, I can only make a general comment on this issue. Essentially, unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed site layout can be achieved without causing significant harm to retained trees (through specialist construction methods) the proposal has to be regarded as unacceptable. The Vicarage grounds are described as an important green, open treed space in the Conservation Area Appraisal and all three elements of this description will be markedly compromised with both direct loss and potential embedded tree damage.*

\* *Noting the proposed loss of trees and potential risk to retained trees, only indicative new planting is shown and it is not possible to make a full assessment as to whether this will compensate for the loss of trees and scrub.*

\* *This proposal will bring the developed edge of the village adjacent to open countryside with the only suggested visual impact mitigation in the form of a hedge to be kept at 1m. height along the western site boundary. This is a sensitive edge to the settlement as it fronts open countryside that slopes away down to Wash Lane which is a public right of way.*

*In the absence of more comprehensive information relating to arboricultural impact assessment and mitigation, and tree, hedge and scrub loss mitigation both in relation to impact on landscape character and habitat loss (although I note a nominal list of potential new planting has been submitted), I cannot give a more comprehensive response. Unless adequate mitigation for these anticipated impacts can be demonstrated, I cannot support the application."*

The revised survey document does now correctly note that the site does fall within the Westleton Conservation Area, and the full tree schedule is now included. Specific points of note arising from reading the report are:

Para 5.2 notes that remedial tree surgery should be carried out following completion of construction works, and should include remedial work to any trees damaged during construction. This is not normally the best practice sequence of events. Any remedial tree surgery should be done prior to construction when the site is freely



accessible. There shouldn't be any damage to trees during construction if the correct tree protection measures have been installed. The impact of trees on construction should be part of the arboricultural implications assessment and any anticipated harm to trees should be planned out of the process. This is more properly anticipated in Para 6.1.

Geosphere Environmental's letter of 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to Matt Bell (Ref: 4537,AR-Ltr001-RF,KML-06.01.20-V2) seems to include an update on conclusions to the original report, as well as revised schedule of tree removals, although it is largely of the same order of magnitude as previously submitted.

Para 4.2 includes the same proposal for post construction remedial pruning as previous para 5.2 (see above).

Para 4.4 contains the following statement - *Buildings within the root protection area will be constructed with a lightweight timber frame using natural materials.* Where building footprints are shown to encroach into RPAs, they don't seem to be of a different building type to the rest of the proposed development so officers are not at all sure how they can suddenly switch to being lightweight timber frame construction, and officers are also not at all sure what 'natural materials' means in this context. If the development is approved, this point will need a lot more clarification of detail.

The 6<sup>th</sup> January letter/report includes a suite of plans that show the extent of tree removals, the extent of RPAs, and an overlay with the proposed development layout. Whilst I welcome the retention of as many trees as possible, and I note that where removals are proposed, 13 of the total of 19 individual trees are Category C, being of poor quality, and/or limited landscape amenity value.

Of the Category A trees shown for removal, one of these is the fine mature Lime T22 which is compromised by its proximity to the Vicarage and its neighbouring tree, the equally fine Plane tree which is shown for retention.

The other 2 Category A trees marked for removal (a Beech and another Lime) are also compromised by overcrowding and I accept that there reasons of good arboricultural practice that justify their removal aside from the development proposals. This equally applies to varying degrees to the 3 Category B trees shown for removal.

However, officers are concerned that whilst a good number of fine quality trees are retained, new build positions are shown to come close to these. Whilst there may well be engineering solutions that can overcome the issue of root zone incursion, what cannot be readily resolved is the issue of heavy shading from retained trees and concerns from residents that will arise from issues to do with the sheer close proximity of these trees. It is anticipated that is inevitable that development of the

layout shown in the 6<sup>th</sup> January letter will lead to future pressure to fell or heavily reduce these trees to the detriment of their landscape amenity value. This concern especially applies to plots adjacent and west of the Plane tree T21, and all the plots to the north of the southern boundary trees, many of which are mature Beech and Lime in the churchyard. The plots will be heavily shaded and subject to substantial seasonal leaf fall. Similarly a number to car parking spaces are shown under the crown spread of T21 which will give rise to complaints of falling tree debris and bird droppings.

Overall, officers accept that the trees on this site need a degree of thinning and respacing to allow retained trees to grow on to their best advantage. And also, the removal of a number of these trees will have a limited impact on public amenity. However the permitting of the development as shown in the latest report will lead to strong future pressure for more removals and this is something the Council will have difficulty in resisting because they will have permitted the development that led to the problems arising. Such removals will be erosive of landscape amenity in this sensitive part of the Conservation Area and should be resisted.

The Arboricultural Method Statement appended to the January 6<sup>th</sup> letter is broadly acceptable, bar the issue described above concerning lightweight structures and natural materials. This could be clarified by any post consent Condition should that be appropriate.

The agent has reviewed the comments of the officers and respond as follows:

- He questions how the development changes to lightweight construction over the RPA's - in actually fact the whole development is lightweight timber frame construction.
- He accepts the quantity of tree removals proposed but is concerned by the potential future 'pressure' from potential residents to cut the remaining trees down. However surely this is something that will completely be in the council's control and anyone buying the properties will be aware to the surrounding trees.
- He questions a couple of tree surgery/ pruning points and we accept his suggestions on these.

Officers do not agree in particular with the point regarding future pruning as the Council would be obliged to consider any application for tree works submitted and has a duty to protect the trees, residential amenity and health and safety. Future pressure remains a significant issue and loss of trees also would impact on the character and appearance of the site.

As such, based on the information submitted, and indeed the harm to the development of the site in principle, the Council does not support the loss of protected trees on the site.

### Design Considerations

There are a number of concerns regarding the design and layout of the proposed development. The applicant is aware of these but is not proposing any amendments as response. The Council's Principal Design and Conservation Officer has raised a number of flaws and this is particularly important given the high bar to design (including layout and responsiveness to prevailing character) espoused in the NPPF.

These can be summarised as follows:

- Officers would prefer a layout that includes much more of a street presence. The existing green edge along Darsham Road could be modified to reveal more of the Vicarage.
- The scheme should take its place within the village streetscene opposite the village hall and contribute positively by its presence. This could include built form up to and at the front of the site. A narrower mews-like entrance creating a proper village streetscene within the site leading to the vicarage could have been an alternative. Instead, there is a lot of space between and to the side-front of Plots 1-2 and Plots 3-5 of indeterminate use and usefulness.
- The layout has an overly urban character with a kind of rigid geometry that sits ill at ease within the loose informality of the village's character. We consider this approach to be entirely the wrong one. This concern was raised at the pre-application stage. No attempt has been made to draw on the language of rural typologies to master this density of development. Courtyard forms, mews, hierarchies of dwellings, cottage scale, the village green. We are uncertain even how the layout acknowledges the presence of the vicarage other than on the axial entrance route. The layout does not join sufficiently to the vicarage except via parking spaces. The overly urban form of the layout is derived from the density of this development is entirely inappropriate for the site and the centre of the village.
- The preferred location of this street to be rather anti-social, shoved away at the back of the site and forming no real visual connection with the village but only the countryside where it would appear as a very hard urban edge (not at all appropriately).
- The form, position and design of the rear terrace are entirely alien to the village character of Westleton. This layout ignores the village in favour of single-mindedly exploiting rural views out of this site regardless of the impact on the rural character of this village at its highly visible edge.

- The positioning of dwellings here and elsewhere across the site does not bear much relation to the pattern of development adjoining this site or in its surroundings. The illustrated view from Wash Lane in the DAS shows how the repetitive, uniform effect of this extended terrace has a suburban character, where there is no variation in scale or grouping of forms, that is alien, inappropriate and wholly unwelcome. This proposed countryside edge – outside of the development boundary – is an example of why this layout is unacceptable.
- We do not agree that parking should be facilitated as a design driver of any layout otherwise what is so very different to this scheme from any volume housebuilder's estate scale layout? Parking outside your front door? We thought the co-housing concept would offer more that was different to any other development proposal.
- There is nothing in the layout that is unconventional, inspiring or a new way of looking at village housing provision. The co-housing concept has led here to anything but a relatively dense layout. The novelty appears to be more to do with tenure arrangement which may have its own merits. How these arrangements have influenced the design layout is difficult to see, objectively – for example, the entire development is entirely predicated on car use, as would be any other kind of development. The layout also appears to maximise development potential, as would any kind of development. None of it is innovative in the way that the concept for tenure/demographic is presented by the CIC. We are of the view that the scheme simply represents over-development in the wrong place with nothing innovative or outstanding in aspect of its layout design.
- The rear street (plots 11-20) ignores the presence of the vicarage and has insufficient relation to it.
- In terms of parking, perhaps this can be pepper-potted throughout any layout.
- The northern edge is organised on the basis of gardens and buildings backing onto those that exist already and this is a sensible strategy in terms of reflecting built form and context in this part of the site. The western edge is very poorly designed in that it is fully populated edge-to-edge by unrelieved built form.
- Could a connection into the adjoining churchyard would have helped overcome the sense that this development is disconnected from its neighbours.
- The volume of this development represents a large number of dwellings in the contrasting style presented here for Westleton.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the individual design of the dwellings is to a high standard, this aspect does not outweigh the other design faults of the scheme we have identified.

#### Flooding and Drainage

The County Council as Local Lead Flood Authority have formally responded advising that insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that a suitable drainage strategy on the site can be secured. In the absence of such they have objected as it is not possible to append conditions when drainage suitability is not certain.

#### Highways Matters

No objections have been raised regarding highways matters in terms of the access and parking provision through the site.

#### Legal Agreement

The application has argued the very special circumstances of the proposal, namely for over 65 year olds with local connections to the village.

A draft S106 has been shared with officers (and subsequently amended), including CIL officers and the Councils Planning Lead Lawyer. Following review, officers note that the cascade set out does not provide any suitable certainty that this will be achieved and is such that in effect the site is open market dwellings both in the short terms and in perpetuity.

The applicant is aware of these concerns but has not submitted any further revisions to deal with such.

The application is therefore, without significant revisions and controls open market housing in the countryside contrary to national and local planning policy.

#### **Recommendation**

Refuse for the reasons outlined above

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LEGAL ADDRESS East Suffolk House, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1RT

**POSTAL ADDRESS Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ**

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## **Appendix 1: - Comments from Westleton Parish Council received 23 August 2019**

### **Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Examination**

#### **Submission by Westleton Parish Council regarding Matter 3 - Area Specific Strategies and Development Allocations, specifically Policies SCLP 12.69 - Land West of the B1125, Westleton and SCLP 12.70 land at Cherry Lee, Darsham Road, Westleton.**

##### **Introduction**

1. The National Planning Policy Framework includes the following statements:

*'plans should be prepared by engagement between plan makers and communities' (para 16c)*

*" in rural areas planning policies should be responsive to local circumstances and support development that reflects local needs' (para 77)*

2. Westleton Parish Council (WPC) welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Plan making process and contends that the housing proposals for Westleton are not responsive to local circumstances and are considerably in excess of what is required to meet local needs when viewed in conjunction with 2 community-led housing projects in preparation designed specifically to address village needs: housing for local elderly residents and affordable housing for local young people.
3. This submission addresses questions 3.99 – 3.105 relating to the sites proposed in Policies 12.69 and 12.70. It seeks to demonstrate that development of both of these Local Plan sites as well as the two additional Community led proposals would lead to excessive expansion of a small village and that Policy 12.69 is unsound within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, the tests for development set by the policies of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and the tests for development set by Policy 12.69 itself.
4. In this submission we refer to four sites:
  - a. The community led site at Glebe Meadows which we refer to as site 1.
  - b. The community led site North of Westleton, West of B1125 which we refer to as site 2.
  - c. The site proposed in Policy 12.69, South of Westleton, West of B1125 which we refer to as site 3.
  - d. The site proposed in Policy 12.70 at Cherry Lee, Darsham Road which we refer to as site 4.

##### **Site SCLP 12.69 West of B1125, Westleton**

Page 1 of 23



### Question 3.99

- 3.99 In the context of the proposed community led housing schemes, is the scale of development proposed at Westleton justified?

#### Proposals for community development in Westleton

5. In addition to the two sites proposed in the Local Plan, two community led housing schemes are proposed in Westleton, that have come forward in parallel to the Local Plan process. These both have the support of WPC and most local people.

#### *Glebe Meadow (site 1)*

6. Glebe Meadow is currently subject to a planning application (DC/19/2839/FUL) for 20 new dwellings restricted to local older people over 65 years of age and change of use of an existing dwelling (The Vicarage) into a communal social hub at Darsham Road Westleton. The applicants are Glebe Meadow Westleton CIC & The Church of England, Bury St Edmunds Diocese.



#### *North of the settlement boundary, West of the B1125 (site 2).*

7. This site is being brought forward as a result of an initiative by the WPC to identify a suitable exceptions site for affordable housing. It is understood that Hastoe Housing Association has reached agreement with the landowner and that Hastoe intends to seek planning permission for 12 affordable homes with up to 80% shared ownership – see appendices 3 and 4. The site meets the requirements of Policy 5.11 (Affordable Housing on Exception Sites) – it meets an identified need, is adjacent the settlement boundary, incorporates a



range of dwelling sizes will be appropriate to its setting in the village and is proposed to be bounded on the north side by allotments for villagers meeting the requirements of Local Plan Policy 8.3.

#### Total Quantity of Housing Development

8. The village had a population of 349 people in 2011 which is estimated to have declined to 336 people by 2018. Development proposals in the pipeline including the local plan sites and the sites detailed above would bring forward 67 homes leading to an increase in population of about 150 people (at 2.25 people per dwelling) a population increase of about 45%. WPC considers this is excessive and contrary to the strategy and policies of the Local Plan for the reasons stated below.

#### *a. Total Housing Proposals against Local Plan Requirements*

9. Table 3.5 of the Local Plan (see below) sets out an indicative contribution by Westleton to District housing requirements of 41 homes. This is clearly far fewer than the 73 likely to come forward (67 plus permissions) if both Local Plan sites and the two community-led sites all come forward.

*Table 3.5 Anticipated housing growth by Town / Parish 2018 - 2036*

Area/Parish	Contribution (by parish)			(C) New housing allocations <sup>22</sup>	(D) Indicative contribution 2018 – 2036 (A+B+C) <sup>23</sup>
	(A) Permissions & resolution to grant permission as at 31/3/2018	(B) Existing Allocations without permission or resolution to grant as at 31/3/2018	Total to date (A) + (B)		
Westleton	6	0	6	35	41 (<0.5%)

(Extract from the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan)

#### *b. Policies for development in rural areas*

10. Policy 3.1 sets out the strategy for growth in the District. Sub section j) refers to 'appropriate growth in rural areas that will help to support and sustain existing communities.'
11. The strategy for rural areas (Policy 12.34) also sets some tests for development – to support and enhance the vitality of rural communities.....whilst protecting and enhancing landscapes, and the natural, built and historic environment.
12. Westleton is defined in the Local Plan as a small village. Policy 5.2 (Housing Development in Small Villages) proposes residential development in the form

of a small group of dwellings of a scale appropriate to the size local and character of the village.

13. Paragraph 77 of the NPPF states that:

'In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing development that reflect local needs.'

14. The development of 67 new homes leading to a 45% increase in the population of the village is contrary to the spirit and intent of National and Local Plan strategy and policy for rural areas and small villages – that scale of development is not appropriate to the size of the village (current population 336, population in ten years time with all four proposals 490 ), the location of the village (within attractive countryside, adjoining the AONB and a County wildlife site), or the character of the village (containing a conservation area and 18 listed buildings).

Comparison of sites against policy requirements

15. Given it considers the development of all four proposed sites would be overdevelopment and contrary to NPPF and Local Plan policy, WPC has indicated below the sites it believes would best conform to National and Local Plan strategy and policy by being appropriate to the size, form and character of the village and by providing the most community benefits.

*a. Site containment and visual impact*

16. Sites 1 and 4 are contained within the built-up area of the village. Site 1 is contained within the curtilage of the old Vicarage and screened by mature trees. Site 4 is contained within the curtilage of two existing dwellings and is well screened by existing mature trees and hedges from all aspects.

17. Site 2 sits at the bottom of the rise of land from the village to the north and is well screened by mature trees and hedges from the B1125. It will also be contained by allotments that the WPC plans to provide to the north of the site (see Appendix 4).

18. Site 3 is the most intrusive in the landscape. Although it also sits at the bottom of the rise in land from the village southwards it is very visible from the southern approach to the village and from the County Wildlife site to the east as the land rises from the east to the west. It would affect the transition from countryside to village which is important in maintaining the rural appearance of the village. It is contrary to Policy 10.4 b) (Landscape Character) as it detrimentally affects the visual relationship and environment around settlements and their landscape settings.

*b. Ability to provide for local needs*

19. PC and local people support the provision of housing in the village for the needs of older and younger households. WPC have taken proactive steps to identify a rural exceptions site for affordable housing and by working with Glebe Meadow CIC to bring forward the proposed 65+ development.
20. The ownership and development arrangements ensure that Site 1 will provide homes solely for older people from the local area (Westleton and the other 7 villages within the Yoxmere Benefice) and will provide a community space. Site 2 is solely for the estimated need for 10 – 15 affordable homes (CAS housing needs survey) which is likely to mainly meet the needs of younger (18 – 35 households), which will be permanently affordable.
21. The Local Plan policy (SCLP 12.69) for Site 3 lacks clarity and certainty. It is presumed that clause c) means a requirement for 1 in 3 to be affordable (in line with policy 5.10) which would yield 6/7 affordable homes. There is no restriction on resale so they would not be permanently affordable. It is not clear how many of the remaining 13/14 homes would be suitable for older people as clause a) simply requires 'a mix of dwellings to include dwellings to meet the needs of older people'. There is no requirement for these units to be available to local people and they are most likely to be taken up as second homes.
22. Furthermore, the potentially high cost of resolving the infrastructure requirements on the site (flooding, sewerage, landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian access) is likely to lead to the developer arguing that the provision of 6/7 affordable homes would make the development not viable. Those affordable units that are provided would not be permanently affordable.
23. It is also presumed that Local Plan policy (SCLP 12.70) for Site 4 would yield about 5 affordable homes. These would not be permanently affordable.
24. WPC concurs with the conclusions of the Glebe Meadow Housing Needs Assessment (see Appendix 2) that the most certain way of providing for the needs of the older and younger population of the village and surrounding area, rather than the demand for second homes, is through Sites 1 and 2 rather than the market led sites proposed in the Local Plan.

## 4.2 Addressing Deficiencies

This situation is clearly unsustainable. There is a clear need for new development in Westleton to meet these deficiencies. Policies dealing with housing mix and affordability may address the issue partially, if applied consistently.

However, there is a clear need also for alternative and specialised housing schemes, with different ownership and tenure options, if the deficiencies are to be addressed fully. It is unlikely that market driven housing on sites allocated in Westleton by the Local Plan will be sufficient to meet identified need of homes for older people.

(Extract from the Glebe Meadow Housing Needs Assessment – see Appendix 2).

### *c. Impact on County level wildlife sites*

25. Only Site 3 has an adverse effect on the County Wildlife Site (see Fig 1) and is contrary to Policy 10.1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity which states that 'proposals that will have a direct or indirect adverse impact ...on locally designated sites of biodiversity ...,including County Wildlife Sites ....., will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated with comprehensive evidence that the benefits of the proposal, in its particular location, outweighs the biodiversity loss.'

26. WPC contend that there is no need for this site to be allocated for housing because of other provision and therefore there are no benefits to Site 3 that would outweigh the biodiversity loss.



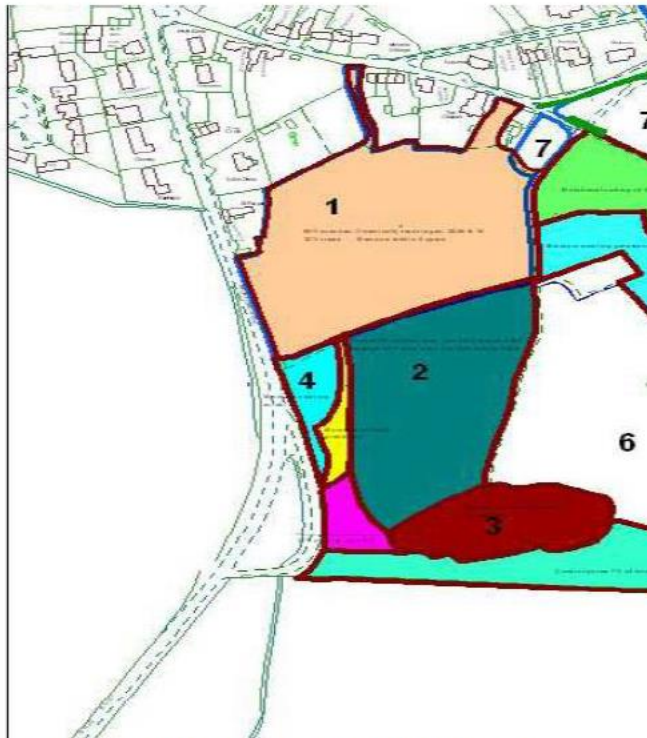


Fig 1 - Map of Westleton County Wildlife site

d. *Likelihood of causing flooding*

27. Only Site 3 has issues with flooding, with raw sewage backing up during times of heavy rain in the drainage ditch forming the northern boundary of the site. The field has poor drainage and more hard surfaces associated with development will exacerbate the problem. The drainage ditch/private watercourse which runs along the northern and eastern boundary is subject to flooding and blockages, with build-up of debris at the Reckford Road culvert. The drainage ditch runs from Darsham Road, Wash Lane, behind Grange View and along the Reckford Road. Whilst a potential developer may attempt to resolve some of these issues, the watercourse could be owned by multiple owners, which could then prove difficult to maintain and thereby increase the risk of flooding to houses in Grange View.

*e. Vehicular and pedestrian access*

28. The Infrastructure Delivery Framework of the Local Plan (at page 452) state that footway improvements are essential for both Local Plan sites (Sites 3 and 4).
29. The B1125 is a rat run for traffic travelling to and from the A12 at Blythburgh to Leiston and Sizewell. Over a period of 8 months 40,280 vehicles were recorded as exceeding 35mph and 2,805 were recorded as exceeding 45mph. The numbers of vehicles using the road will increase substantially when construction of Sizewell C starts in a few years' time. Speeds are highest at each end of the village.
30. While the carriage way is at standard size in the north of the village it progressively narrows and is at its narrowest in the south of the village at the point of access to Site 3 – see Photos 1 and 2 below. At this point there is currently no footpath. The footpath starts on the eastern side of the road north of site 3 but it is of substandard one-person width (1.05m rather than the standard 1.8m) for a few hundred yards towards the centre of the village (see photo 1 below). It would not allow an adult with a pushchair to walk with a child at their side for example. WPC consider that given the substandard width of the road and the substandard footway it will not be possible to construct a standard footway to serve Site 3. The provision of a footpath on the western side of the road is not possible without the purchase of a strip of land in private ownership permission for which is unlikely to be forthcoming.
31. Taking the speed of traffic into account along with the need for pedestrians to cross the road to access a footpath of substandard width WPC considers that Site 3 cannot meet the test in NPPF paragraph 108 section b) that 'safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.'



*Photo 1 - View from the application site northwards into the village showing start of narrow footpath – source Google Street View*



*Photo 2 - View northwards into Westleton showing point of access to Site 3 to the left onto the B1125 – source Google Street View*



32. The essential requirement for a footpath is also applied in the Local Plan to Site 4. Darsham Road is also a narrow road and WPC also doubts that a footpath can be provided between site 4 and the village centre. However, Darsham Road has little traffic and speeding is not a concern (traffic on the road usually travels well below the 30mph limit due to the nature of the road: narrow, no markings). Site 1 is situated on a quiet road in the centre of the village and Site 2 adjoins a full width road and can link with a full width footpath to the centre of the village.

#### **Question 3.99 Conclusion**

33. The response of WPC to question 3.99 is therefore that:
- a. the cumulative effect of all four sites currently proposed for housing would constitute the excessive expansion of a small village contrary to national and local plan policy; and,
  - b. the development of Site 3 as proposed in Policy 12.69 is contrary to national and local plan policies and not sound for the reasons set out above.

#### **Question 3.100**

- 3.100 Is the provision of dwellings designed to meet the needs of the older population justified and would the Policy be effective in this regard?

34. The Glebe Meadow Housing Needs Survey and Assessment ( Appendix 1 and 2 - full version at <http://publicaccessdocuments.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/NorthgatePublicDocs/01498524.pdf>) identifies a clear need for specialist provision for older people. Policy 12.69 would not be as effective as Site 1 in meeting this provision as:
- a. The policy is imprecise requiring simply 'a mix of dwellings to include dwellings to meet the needs of older people' which could mean two dwellings; and,
  - b. Unlike site 1 there is no provision that requires these dwellings to be sold only to older people, or to control their resale or to ensure they meet local need rather than second home demand.

#### **Question 3.101**

- 3.101 What are the implications for the deliverability or developability of the site given the stated treatment limitations at the Westleton Water Recycling Centre?
35. There are two problems with the foul sewerage provision for Westleton which also serves the villages of Darsham, Dunwich, Theberton and Middleton. First, the main sewer pipe is asbestos and suffers regular

breakages that cause smell and require regular emergency call outs for repairs. It is likely that the pipe needs to be replaced. Second, the Sewerage Treatment works is at capacity and when flooding occurs there is discharge of untreated sewage into the Reckford Run which is within the County Wildlife Site. Improvements to the system are clearly required.

36. The Infrastructure Delivery Framework (page 455) of the Local Plan is unclear – it refers to 'potential' improvements to the Westleton works and infrastructure but also describes them as 'essential'. In the view of WPC improvements are required to meet the needs of current users as well as development already permitted (notably at Darsham for example) and planned. Policy 3.5 requires that where there is no capacity, phasing of sites and the completion of improvement works before occupation should be required to avoid a breach of environmental regulations. (Note - Policy 9.7 is inconsistent with Policy 3.5 as it refers only to phasing).
37. Note – WPC has not been able to find a copy of the 'Anglian Water Asset Management Plan' referred to in Appendix B of the Local Plan.

#### **Question 3.102**

3.102 Would criterion e) be effective in safeguarding the characteristics of Westleton Common County Wildlife Site?

38. It is not clear how these biodiversity enhancements could be provided given the small size of Site 3. Furthermore, as expressed above, WPC preference is for this site to be removed from the Local Plan thereby also removing the need for any mitigation of damage to the adjacent County Wildlife Site.

#### **Question 3.103**

3.103 Is there any reason that the proposed allocation would not be deliverable or developable as per the definitions in the Framework?

39. Yes, Site 3 is unlikely to be deliverable because it cannot meet the requirements of Policy 12.69 regarding flooding, footpaths, water treatment and biodiversity cannot be met and the access to the site would be unsafe.

#### **Policy SCLP 12.70 Land at Cherry Lee, Darsham Road, Westleton**

#### **Question 3.104**

3.104 What are the implications for the deliverability or developability of the site given the stated treatment limitations at the Westleton Water Recycling Centre?

40. See paragraphs 35 and 36 above.

**Question 3.105**

3.105 Is there any reason that the proposed allocation would not be deliverable or developable as per the definitions in the Framework?

41. The requirement for a footpath may not be deliverable but it may not be required given that Darsham Road is lightly trafficked – see paragraph 32 above.

**Conclusions**

- 42. For the reasons set out above WPC opposes Site 3 and Policy 12.69 which it considers does not meet the basic conditions and test of soundness.**

Note – Appendix C incorrectly refers to 35 dwellings re Policy 12.69 when it should be 20 dwellings.

Westleton Parish Council 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019

## Appendix 1 – Glebe Meadow - Westleton Housing Needs Survey Results

March 2019 Public Consultation Questionnaire	Friday	Saturday	total
Visitors	61	45	106
Questionnaires completed	36	24	60

	yes	no	not sure
Are you familiar with the concept of cohousing?	49	6	2
Would this kind of scheme would be good for this area?	54	0	6

what shared facilities would you like to see available?	Essential	Important	Would like	Not interested
TV/Cinema	8	21	22	9
Shared car/car pool	9	20	22	3
minibus for outings	8	21	23	3
on site manager	18	21	20	0
allotments	5	14	26	10
games/activity room	11	27	21	2
chicken run		5	18	29
guest bedrooms	23	23	11	2
large kitchen/diner for shared meals	10	24	21	3
laundry room	18	13	16	7

Would you consider giving up your car if there was -	carshare	minibus	Never	Don't drive
	30	17	21	1

Would you prefer to pay <b>more upfront</b> for energy efficiency, or <b>lower upfront</b> but have higher running costs?	More energy efficient	Lower Upfront
	49	8

How important would it be for you to have a parking space adjacent to your property?	Essential	Important	Don't mind	Not important
	20	21	14	3

If you had to choose between a parking space or private outside space which would it be?	Parking	Private outdoor space
	25	33

Please rate the following benefits of co-housing	Very imp	Important	Some impor	Not at all imp
Having people around willing to help me	33	18	9	1
Being surrounded by like minded people	18	27	11	2
Not driving after dark if there's car sharing	14	19	20	7
Being willing to compromise where necessary	16	26	16	
Sharing events/outings	9	21	28	

Glebe Meadow want to share in any increase in the value of your property when it is sold. Does this seem fair to you?	yes	No	Not sure
	38	6	14

Are you adept with new technology?	mainly no but most had a laptop
	1 bed 2 bed
If you were rightsizing would you prefer 1 or 2 bedrooms?	2 55

The properties will be sold on long leaseholds + a share of the site freehold. Would this put you off?	yes	No	Not sure
	6	41	12

## Appendix 2 – Extracts from Glebe Meadow Housing Needs Assessment

<http://publicaccessdocuments.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/NorthgatePublicDocs/01498524.pdf>



# Housing Needs Assessment Glebe Meadow Westleton CIC, Suffolk

June 2019

## 1.1 Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this document is to provide analysis of housing supply and the demographic and household profile of Westleton, and contrast this with norms across broader housing markets. This analysis allows assessment of whether the current stock profile of Westleton can sustainably meet the changing demographic of the current population.

The document is based on a desk-top assessment of available evidence against the context of Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The scope of the assessment is proportionate to the scale and complexity of the neighbourhood.

The assessment provides a context for considering a proposed specialist co-housing development for a site in Westleton. Westleton is a small village settlement in the area of East Suffolk Council (which was created on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 through the merger of Suffolk Coastal Council and Waveney District Council).

This report has been prepared on behalf of Glebe Meadow Westleton CIC. D2H is not responsible for the accuracy of information provided by third parties.

The settlement of Westleton falls within the lower super output areas coded E00154134 and E00154132, which we shall treat as the study area for the purpose of this assessment, although the target market for this cohousing scheme is the wider Yoxmere Benefice which includes Westleton and 7 surrounding villages.

Lower super output areas are the smallest geographical areas for which Census and other statistical data is readily provided, although not all Census data is available at this level. These are also the smallest populations which are statistically significant in informing future estimates and projections.

**Table 1: Change in Westleton population age profile between 2001 and 2011**

Age cohort	Census 2001 no.	Census 2001 %	Census 2011 no.	Census 2011 %
Aged 0-17	42	11.9	32	9.2
Aged 18-44	58	16.4	43	12.3
Aged 45-64	112	31.6	113	32.4
Aged 65-74	80	22.6	73	20.9
Aged 75+	62	17.5	88	25.2
Total	354	100	349	100
Mean age	54.57		58.51	

Source: Nomisweb (Census 2001;2011)

**Table 3: Property type**

Property type	Number	% Westleton	% District**	% County	% Region
Detached*	165	64.5	44.66	35.24	29.78
Semi-detached*	59	23.0	29.77	31.16	31.10
Terraced*	28	10.9	16.44	22.01	22.98
Apartment	4	1.6	9.13	11.59	16.14
Total	256	100	100	100	100

Source: Nomisweb (Census 2011)

Notes:

\* denotes house or bungalow;

\*\* former district of Suffolk Coastal



**Table 5: Tenure by household category**

Category	No. of households	% Westleton	% District**	% County	% Region
Owner occupied without mortgage	151	71.7	42.5	35.7	32.9
Owner occupied with mortgage	22	12.2	30.7	31.5	34.7
Shared ownership	1	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.7
Social rent	8	4.4	11.3	14.8	15.7
Private rent	18	10.0	13.6	15.6	14.7
Rent free	2	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.3
Total	180	100	100	100	100

Source: Nomisweb (Census 2011)

Note: \*\* former district of Suffolk Coastal

Table 5 shows that the vast majority of households in Westleton are owner occupiers. The percentage of dwellings owned without a mortgage are twice of that within the county and the region. To a degree this reflects the age profile of the village. It stands to reason that the older the average age of the population, the more likely it is more households have come to the end of their mortgage term. It may also reflect relative affluence of the households within the settlement. The percentage of 'affordable housing' (shared ownership, social rent) is significantly lower than that within the wider geographies. The percentage of private rental in Westleton is closer to that within the wider geographies and in terms of the settlement is twice that of affordable housing sector.

**Table 7 Requirement for specialist older person housing in the Suffolk Coastal district (No. of units)**

Type of specialist accommodation	Current profile	Profile 2036	Additional units required
Sheltered housing	1,321	2,307	986
Enhanced sheltered housing	41	144	103
Extra care housing	148	346	198
Total	1,510	2,797	1,287

Source: Suffolk County Council, 2016

**Table 8 Reasons to move (top 6 responses)**

Reason	%	No.
Need to downsize accommodation - Present home is difficult to manage	59.32	35
Need a smaller garden	54.24	32
Need a modern property that is easier to maintain and cheaper to heat	35.59	21
Need physically more appropriate accommodation e.g. single storey	35.59	21
Need access to better public transport	33.90	20
Need to be nearer to family or friends or like- minded people in a cohousing scheme	32.20	19

Source: Glebe Meadow CIC Housing Needs Report 2019.

The primary data provided by the Westleton housing needs survey clearly echoes the secondary data compiled across various geographies for the purpose of this report. These indicate the need for specialist, bespoke rightsized housing in the settlement, to meet the needs of the ageing population in a sustainable manner.

## 4. Conclusions

### 4.1 Local Need

The housing stock in Westleton tends to comprise larger dwellings. In addition, the cost of dwellings is around 30% above average for the district. At the same time there are limited options in terms of tenure.

This needs to be set against the aging population and lack of opportunity both for younger people and older people wanting to downsize.

There is a clearly evidenced need, but current deficiencies in the housing stock Westleton as outlined in this report in terms of:

- Smaller dwellings;
- Dwellings suitable for the elderly or for people with special requirements;
- Affordable housing provision; and
- Housing with communal facilities.



## 4.2 Addressing Deficiencies

This situation is clearly unsustainable. There is a clear need for new development in Westleton to meet these deficiencies. Policies dealing with housing mix and affordability may address the issue partially, if applied consistently.

However, there is a clear need also for alternative and specialised housing schemes, with different ownership and tenure options, if the deficiencies are to be addressed fully. It is unlikely that market driven housing on sites allocated in Westleton by the Local Plan will be sufficient to meet identified need of homes for older people.

Appendix 3 – note of meeting with Hastoe Housing Association

**Meeting with HASTOE Housing Association**

**Subject:** A meeting to discuss updated information from all parties,  
and receive new information from HASTOE Housing.

**Date:** 01/07/2019 @ 12:30hrs

**Venue:**

Brightspace Community Action,  
160 Hadleigh Rd  
Ipswich  
Suffolk IP2 0HH

**Attendees:**

Sunila Osborne (SO) Community Action Suffolk  
Isobel Wright (IW) HASTOE Housing (Regional Development Manager)  
Neil Salisbury (NS) HASTOE Housing (Project Manager)  
Westleton Parish Council: Colin P. Fisher (CPF) (Chair Local Housing)  
Ian Johnson (IJ) (Vice Chair)  
Andrew Turner (AT)

SO opened the meeting and introductions were offered by all attendees.

IW tabled an A3 sketched plan of the proposed site. This plan, confidential to this meeting, formed the basis for discussion.

IW stated there had been a number of meetings with all parties, with considerable complications by the landowner to agree a satisfactory valuation on land price, terms and conditions. However, a contract to purchase the land has now been completed and is ready to sign. The contract has an expiry period of 18 months in which to complete the planning process and commence building.

IW explained the site is categorised as a "Rural Exception Site" and will be subject to terms and conditions allowing, and in respect of, close family connections with village residents present and past. However, terms and conditions on how this will work will be finalised and agreed with the WPC at a later date.

It is expected that a ratio of up to 80% shared ownership would be applied with rents adjusted on pro rata basis depending on percentage shared. Calculation for this is governed by the nation wide "Local Housing Allowance" scheme set by government and levied at 2.75%.

On the question of 12 allotment spaces IW said that, whilst the Hastoe plan could support this facility, including a water supply, the additional land area required, would be a matter for the WPC and landowner.

IJ enquired when a building start date could be expected, IW said that 12 months from now would be a realistic time period for this to happen.

In summary, all parties felt better informed and a lot of pertinent questions had been answered. However, the name of the Land Agent remains unknown but is thought to be Clarke & Simpson of Framlingham. SO agreed to use CPF as

a point of contact but will also copy all relevant correspondence to the WPC clerk.

It also should be noted that, IW is handing over responsibilities for this project to NS.

Meeting ended around 1.25pm.

CPF

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 31 July 2019 08:45  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[westletonclerk@gmail.com](mailto:westletonclerk@gmail.com);  
**Subject:** RE: Westleton- Proposed Hastoe development

Good Morning [REDACTED]

It was good to catch up yesterday and I am pleased that the Parish Council and the landowner are happy with the amended plan showing the allotments. We have the option agreement ready to be signed and returned and now we know the allotments are achievable we will progress this. I have looked through and cannot see anything unusual regarding delayed payments to the landowner. It is usual that the completion on the land occurs after the planning is obtained. I am seeking the quotes to carry out the surveys and requesting the internal authorisation for the cost of the architects and surveys. I will keep you informed as things progress.

Many thanks,

██████████ Project Manager | Hastoe Group

Direct Dial: 01753 666111; mobile: 01753 666111  
Email: [info@hastoe.com](mailto:info@hastoe.com) | [www.hastoe.com](http://www.hastoe.com)

Hastoe Housing Association | Rectory Farm Barns, Little Chesterford, Saffron Walden,  
Essex, CB10 1UD

## Appendix 2: Comments from Historic England received 16 August 2019



Historic England

Mr Phil Perkin  
East Suffolk District Council  
East Suffolk House  
Riduna Park, Station Road  
Melton, Woodbridge  
Suffolk  
IP12 1RT

Direct Dial: 01223 582738

Our ref: P01093010

14 August 2019

Dear Mr Perkin

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**THE VICARAGE, DARSHAM ROAD, WESTLETON, SUFFOLK, IP17 3AQ  
Application No. DC/19/2839/FUL**

Thank you for your letter of 25 July 2019 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

**Historic England Advice**

This application proposes the development of 21 new dwellings on ground around the former vicarage to St Peter's Church in the Westleton conservation area. The grade II\* listed church largely dates from the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is a relatively modest building, partly due to the historic loss of its west tower. However, it stands on the edge of Westleton village at the top of slightly rising ground and set away from the main historic core of the settlement. The former vicarage stands adjacent in its gardens. The building appears to have a 17<sup>th</sup> century core, clad in later brick, with an extension of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century date. The Council have identified it as a building of historic interest in its own right and it is statutorily designated as a heritage asset by its inclusion in the conservation area. The former vicarage is set in generous grounds which indicate its historic status. They also combine with the churchyard to create a significant open space at this side of the conservation area which contribute to the historic significance of both church and area.

Developing the site would remove this open area, occupy the historic setting of the vicarage and, as images in the heritage assessment show, introduce new building



Historic England, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU  
Telephone 01223 58 2749 [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk)

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.  
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.



LEGAL ADDRESS East Suffolk House, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1RT

POSTAL ADDRESS Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ

which would be visible from the churchyard in winter and in views of the church at the village edge. We consider developing the site has the potential to harm the historic significance of both church and conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development and that protection and enhancement of the historic environment is an overarching objective in this (paragraphs 7 and 8). The significance of listed buildings and conservation areas can be harmed or lost by alteration to them or development in their setting. The NPPF states that clear and convincing justification should be made for any such harm and that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of listed buildings and conservation areas irrespective of the level of harm caused (paragraphs 193 and 194). This weight and the justification for harm should be especially convincing where harm to buildings of a high grade of listing is concerned. Paragraph 200 also states that the Council should favour those proposals for development which preserve those elements of setting that make a positive contribution to the heritage asset or better reveal its significance.

We have reviewed this application in terms of this policy and consider that development of the application site could result in harm to the historic significance of St Peter's church and Westleton conservation area and not preserve those elements of setting that make a positive contribution to the heritage assets and better reveal their significance in terms of the NPPF, paragraph 193. We would recommend the Council consider this aspect and if any such harm is identified paragraph 196 requires the Council to consider any public benefit which might be delivered by the proposals and weigh this against the harmful impact. We leave this balancing process to the Council but would raise concerns about the application on heritage grounds.

#### **Recommendation**

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 7, 8, 193 and 194 of the NPPF. In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice.

Yours sincerely



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David Eve  
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas  
e-mail: [david.eve@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:david.eve@historicengland.org.uk)



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