

Ref: Application DC/19/2839/FUL

FAO: Liz Beighton, Planning Development Manager

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**Introduction:**

Dear Liz,

Thank you for your email dated 29/11/2019 and subsequence correspondence via phone and email. In the intervening period between the date of your email and now, we have supplied the following additional information to satisfy your concerns.

- S106 agreement
- Updated Arboricultural Survey and Preliminary Implications Assessment
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment

In addition to these we have agreed the final version of the independent review of the Economic Viability Assessment with you.

The further two sections of this document provide a formal response to you and your colleagues comments to which we have previously responded to in emails.

**Our responses to the list of items raised in Liz Beighton's email dated 29/11/2019:**

*(First the case officer's comment is highlighted in red and then our response follows in black.)*

1. "The site lies outside the settlement boundary of Westleton. The scheme for 20 market dwellings does not meet any of the criteria in paragraph 79 of the NPPF or Policy DM3 of the Local Plan which would allow for the setting aside of the policy of restraint. The August 2019 of housing. The Council's Housing Land Supply Statement confirms that the Council can maintain a 7.03 year supply and therefore there is no housing need argument presented to justify why an exception to policy could be made. The proposal is contrary to policy seeking to protect the countryside from inappropriate development.

You will note that the Planning Policy team have objected to the application for this reason."

The proposal is **partly** outside the physical limits of Westleton. 15 of the 20 proposed houses are outside the village boundary. Please note that 5 of the proposed dwellings and the change of use of the vicarage are all within the village boundary, and that the village boundary was redrawn only in November 2016 taking the remaining land outside the village boundary. Also, please see Section 3 of Appendix C in which the current revision of the village boundary is questioned, as is the Glebe land which is enclosed on 3 sides by buildings, being classified as 'countryside'.

Notwithstanding this, the proposal still meets policy as:

Both the NPPF and the council's local plan allow for development outside village boundaries in certain circumstances. The proposal meets said circumstances for the reasons described in Appendix C\_Housing Policy Statement. In brief the policies of particular relevance are:

- a) NPPF Paragraph 77 – *"Planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support developments that reflect local needs"*
  - i) A housing needs survey & report (see Appendix A and A(i)) has been commissioned and submitted along with the application. The report clearly shows the local need for the proposed scheme (over and above that which will be provided for by other local site allocations as identified in the emerging local plan)
  - ii) At the time of drafting this email, the count of objections from the public as shown on the council's website is 11 from **9** individuals (2 of these are second comments from the same members of the public). The count of supporting comments is **35**. There is clear public support of the proposal.
  - iii) The Parish Council are in full support of the scheme. Further to this they have commissioned a professional report which strongly supports the proposed scheme over and above the site allocations being put forth in the emerging local plan. This report was uploaded to the documents list for this application on 23/08/2019 under the title 'Town/Parish Consultation Response'. There is clear Parish support for the proposal.
- b) NPPF Paragraph 78 - *"To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.*

*Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services".*

- i) The proposal will clearly help maintain the vitality of Westleton and will support its existing services.
  - ii) It will also enhance the village's vitality by opening up the site's frontage to the highway and revealing the vicarage, returning it to the focal point it once was.
  - iii) The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich has made written representation to the council (uploaded to the case file on 13/01/2020) expressing his enthusiasm and support for the scheme which he says will help rural villages such as Westleton 'to retain a cross-section of all age groups and allow older residents to continue making their contribution to village life'
- c) The Government Guidance for Councils in preparing planning policies for older and disabled people issued on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 highlights the critical need for Councils to 'offer older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs (which) can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems.' This is exactly what Glebe Meadow offers.

"The application has argued the very special circumstances of the proposal, namely for over 65 year olds with local connections to the village, however there is no formal, detailed mechanism before this Council which would ensure that this could be achieved. This would be expected through a detailed S106 and this is needed before any recommendation is made given it is pivotal to understand if there any bone fide exceptions which can be controlled. Given the significance of this issue, the drafting of a S106 Agreement cannot be reserved until a positive recommendation is made as it goes to the heart of the argument.

The initial draft prepared and submitted contains insufficient information and too much flexibility in the triggers, which has the resulting effect that the dwellings have the real potential, both now and in perpetuity, to be unrestricted market dwellings with no control over who they are sold to."

In the intervening period between the date of Liz Beighton's email (29/11/2019) and now, the case officer's concerns with the original Heads of Terms were listed and supplied to the applicant. We agreed with all of the case officer's comments and subsequently all have been addressed in the new fully drafted S106 agreement which was submitted to the council on 13/12/2019.

2. "The scheme is for 20 two bedroom houses. Policy SP3 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that there is a mix of housing sizes on sites to ensure that developments are sustainable and inclusive. The proposal does not provide a mix and is therefore contrary to policy. I am unconvinced that there is a suitable reason that an appropriate mix cannot be secured in this instance."

The proposal is an exception site delivering a very specific type of housing that we have shown proven need for (see Appendix A and A(i)) in Westleton. The proposed houses are for older people to downsize with the potential of having an in-house carer. This will free-up other housing in the area which is likely to be larger housing. Providing a mix of housing sizes

which were to include larger properties would be contrary to the aims of the project and the identified local need.

Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan SSP3 - "strategy will be to increase the stock of housing to provide for the full range of size, type and tenure of accommodation to meet the needs of the existing and future population.....Such provision is to be made in a manner that addresses both the immediate needs of the local resident population and the longer-term future needs of the population..."

This proposal truly addresses the future needs of a small rural village with an aging population, offering a sustainable and energy efficient community housing development. It is a highly thought-through and justified proposal.

A housing needs survey & report (see Appendix A and A(i)) has been commissioned and submitted along with the application. The report clearly shows the local need for the proposed scheme (**over and above that which will be provided for by other local site allocations as identified in the emerging local plan**)

In addition to this it should be noted that the provision of housing for elderly people in both of the allocated sites in Westleton in the Emerging Local Plan are for 'fully adaptable homes'. This requires the housing to meet M4(2) of approved document M of the Building Regulations. The Glebe Meadow scheme goes much further by providing 20 dwellings which are all designed to the standards of M4(3) of approved documents M of the building regulations, meaning that the houses are 'wheelchair user dwellings'. They will all be fully wheelchair usable from day 1 of being constructed and will not require any adaptation. Additionally, space is provided at first floor for a live-in carer so the dwellings can provide for assistive living. Furthermore, the consideration of wheelchair users extends far beyond the dwellings themselves and their parking arrangements (which is all that is required under the building regulations) as the whole site has been designed with wheelchair users in mind. Providing wheelchair user dwellings means that the housing will truly meet the local needs requirements identified.

3. "No on site affordable housing has been provided as required by the NPPF and Policy DM2 of the Local Plan. A viability assessment has been provided with the application which seeks to argue that the site is no viable with any affordable provision. This has been independently assessed, the results of which have been sent to you, which disagrees stating that a the site can support a reduced level of 30% affordable housing. The mix of sizes of the affordable units should meet that specified in Policy SP3. In the absence of any such provision the proposal is contrary to Policy DM2"

The independently assessment quoted above proved to inaccurate on many levels. In the intervening period between the date of Liz Beighton's email (29/11/2019) and now, we have raised the inaccuracies with the independent consultant who in turn has revised their assessment.

The independent assessment now concludes that no affordable housing is viable on the site but a commuted sum equivalent of the surplus achieved of around £36k can be secured via the S106 agreement.

We agree with the conclusion of the revised independent assessment and have included the recommendations within the draft S106 agreement which has been submitted to the council.

4. "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. No details of how this can be incorporated into the scheme has been submitted and therefore in the absence of such the proposal is contrary to Policy DM27 of the Local Plan. 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. The objection to the application on these grounds is supported by the Council's ecologist and also Suffolk Wildlife Trust."

A Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken for the site and was appended to the original application (see: 1802\_Appendix H\_Ecology PEA)

The PEA identified the requirement for further surveys for Great Crested Newts, Bats and Reptiles. These further surveys were commissioned, and the resulting reports were submitted to the council on 21/08/2019. This was supplemented with an email the Planning case officer with the following commitments (in purple):

"We are now in receipt of a report (see attached) which covers further ecological surveys as required by the Ecology PEA (and since requested by Natural England and Suffolk WildLife Trust in their comments).

Please can this be added to the application file and sent to the relevant consultees.

I note the recommendations of the report, If the council is minded to approve the application then we would welcome conditions to ensure these are undertaken:

Para 4.1

"A detailed **Amphibian and Reptile Mitigation Strategy** is required to ensure that impacts are avoided, mitigated, and where necessary compensated for as per the mitigation hierarchy and National Planning Policy Framework 2019. This will include an unlicensed method statement to avoid impacts on any GCNs that may be present locally to avoid offences being caused and may involve supervision of clearance works by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). [...] **Development and submission of this strategy should be secured through standard planning conditions (BS 42020:20131 D.2.2 - Biodiversity Method Statement).**"

Para 4.2

"As **T20 and T51** support Low BRP and are to be removed it is recommended that a tree surgeon soft fells both trees under the supervision of an ECoW in anticipation of any bats being present. If bats are found, they will be moved by the ECoW into one of two artificial roosting boxes which will have been erected

on a retained tree on site ahead of works. Other trees on site to be felled have Negligible BRP and may be felled without supervision."

#### **"Light disturbance – construction and operational phases**

Lighting design will be made with reference to published guidance and will consider: Type of lamp (light source): Light levels should be as low as possible as required to fulfil the lighting need. Low or high-pressure sodium lamps should be used preferentially instead of mercury or metal halide lamps; and

Lighting design: Lighting should be directed to where it is needed, with no horizontal spillage towards existing trees or hedgerows, or the new attenuation pond. This can be achieved by restricting the height of the lighting columns and the design of the luminaire as follows:

- Light columns in general should be as short as possible as light at a low level reduces the ecological impact.
- If taller columns (>8m) are required, the use of cowls, hoods, reflector skirts or shields should be used to prevent horizontal spill.
- The use of asymmetric beam floodlights (as opposed to symmetric) orientated so that the glass is parallel to the ground will ensure that the light is cast in a downward direction and avoids horizontal spillage; and
- Movement sensors and timers should be used to minimise the lit time."

#### **"Compensatory tree and hedgerow planting**

Legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 call for retention, compensation, and enhancement of lost biodiversity during planning which will include trees, scrub, and grassland which currently is used by commuting and foraging bats. It is advised that this functionality can be compensated on site through additional landscaping and proposed site layout amendments:

1. Restrict proposed new tree (T) and hedgerow (H) planting where possible to native and locally sourced species from the following list:

- Common hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) (T/H)
- Midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*) (H)
- Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) (H)
- Common lime (*Tilia x europaea*) (T)
- Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) (T)
- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) (T)
- Field maple (*Acer campestre*) (T/H)
- Crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*) (T/H)
- Dog rose (*Rosa canina*) (H)



- *Guelder rose (Viburnum opulus) (H)*
  - *Holly (Ilex aquifolium) (T/H)*
2. *Replace proposed 1.8m high closed board fencing along the east and west site boundaries with native species-rich ( $\geq 5$  spp./30m) hedgerows using species from the above list.*
  3. *Sow a 0.5-1m margin from the base of new and existing hedgerows with a suitable native species mixture 2 . Prepare ground, sow, and maintain as per supplier guidance."*

Para 4.3

"A **Biodiversity Method Statement** or similar could be conditioned (e.g. BS 42020:2013 D.2.1) to ensure breeding birds, hedgehogs and commuting/foraging bats are mitigated during the construction and operational phase of the development."

Para 4.4

"As a minimum items **1 to 2 in Table 4.1 should be implemented as part of the proposed site landscaping** and will ensure the scheme complies with relevant planning policy and deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain. The additional measures 3 to 6 would provide further biodiversity enhancements."

In response to the above submission, the council's ecological officer made representation (see representation '01512556' \_ an email from James Mayer, East Suffolk Council Ecologist to Planning Case Officer) and concludes that:

*'If it is determined that development at this site is acceptable, the implementation of the measures identified in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Technical Note: Amphibian, Reptile and Bat Survey Results reports must be secured by condition. Due to the presence of a number of ecological receptors on the site (including protected species), no works (including any vegetation clearance or ground disturbance) should take place until the mitigation details (particularly an Amphibian and Reptile Mitigation Strategy) have been approved and implemented.'*

We completely agree with the ecology officer's comments and as already acknowledged in our ecological reports and emails these further reports, mitigations and enhancements can be secured by appropriate conditions.

5. "There are concerns over the impact to on-site trees. The tree survey is incorrect in that it states that the site is not located within the Conservation Area, which is not the case. Its inclusion therefore means that all trees over 75mm DBH are protected by virtue of Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act unless their removal is accepted by the local planning authority.

A number of trees are proposed for removal as part of this proposal. The submitted tree report schedule of trees appears to be partially missing from the documents. A full understanding of the detail will not be possible without all the required information. A total of 23 trees are proposed for removal including the major mature lime tree.

This above errors in the Arboriculture Consultant's reporting have been addressed, revised and re-issued to the council on 12/01/2020 for review.

The Council's Landscape and Arboricultural manager has advised in his consultation response that there is insufficient information submitted and changes to the proposed layout of the development has not resulted in an updated tree assessment. 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 we note a nominal list of potential new planting has been submitted), it is not possible to give a comprehensive response on the merits of the application.

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."

It should be noted that the submitted scheme is based on the pre-application advice from the Council's Tree Officer, including his recommendations of opening-up the frontage of the site including the removal of trees. The only Key trees identified to be retained by the tree officer at that time were T21, T19 and either one of T6 or T7. All of which have been incorporated into the design as well as many other existing trees on and surrounding the site.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment addressing the tree officer's other concerns was issued to the council on 12/01/2020 for review. The assessments provide detail of Tree Removal and pruning, Tree Protection, Working procedures in Root Protection areas and provisions for tree Planting.

It is our suggestion that these measures are secured by conditions if the application is to be approved. In addition to this we suggest it is conditioned that a detailed proposed landscape design of hard and soft landscaping is to be submitted to and agreed with the council prior to works commencing on site. This should include schedules of new tree and shrub planting for approval by the Council's tree officer.

6. "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."

Paragraphs 4.23 to 4.40 of 'Appendix D \_ Heritage Impact Assessment' provide a detailed description of the Conservation area and the council adopted 'Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan' [CAAMP]

In addition to this, views onto the site are shown in section 2.4 of the Design and Access Statement (DAS). These images clearly show that the site is not 'open'. This is further re-enforced by the fact the vicarage cannot be seen from any public vantage points. The site instead presents itself as dense vegetation from the highways and churchyard vantage points and as an unmanaged hedge line with backdrop of trees from the Wash Lane public footpath.

The proposal has no negative effect on the 'openness' of the site from any public viewpoint, in fact it can be argued that it instead increases openness of the site from the public highway.

#### View from wash Lane:

The DAS notes that the view from Wash Lane 'is referred to in the Conservation Area Appraisal 2010 SPD (further detailed in paragraphs 4.30 onwards in the Heritage Report). However, since the appraisal was adopted the former Fisks's Nursery has been developed into Clematis Close with its houses of mainly 2 storey which now tends to dominate the views toward Westleton. From this view the proposed site is set back further than both Clematis Close and the mature tree-lined boundary of the church.'

Section 4.7 of the DAS shows what the proposal will look like from the distant views from Wash Lane public footpath. The DAS comments that:

'The impact of the proposal on the view from Wash Lane was the main consideration when developing the built form and scale of the dwellings proposed on the Glebe land. Here the site is visible in the context of St Peters church (far right) as well as Phoenix Cottage (centre left) and the dwellings of Clematis Close (far left).

The proposed dwellings (centre right) are designed to be a subtle addition to the landscape. Their gable ends face onto the field, helping break-up the mass of the buildings along the terrace. The terrace itself is interrupted by gaps to help break-up the roof-scape rhythm. The eaves and ridge height are kept very low so the proposed dwellings are not only vastly subservient to St Peters Church but their roof-line is also kept below the trees in the background so the existing and natural skyline is retained.

Material choice is also an important factor. The roof finish is proposed to be slate. Unlike the roofing of Clematis Close which stands out because of its light nature, the very dark finish of slate will effectively disappear into the dark backdrop of trees behind. The gable ends of the proposed dwellings are largely glazed. To reduce the risk of this

glazing creating glare, it is set back into the building form and as such is shaded by the roof and side walls. In addition to this the upper portion of the gable is semi concealed by timber louvres. The natural timber of the louvres themselves and the shadows they create ensure the gable ends, much like the roof finish, blend into their surroundings.' From the far views from Wash Lane the proposed buildings are visible as a belt between the hedging in the foreground and the backdrop of trees, however the design has been carefully developed to reduce the proposal's impact from this view, as is evident in the image in section 4.7 of the DAS.

#### View from Darsham Road:

Section 4.5 of the DAS shows before and after images of the proposal when viewed from Darsham Road (bottom right of page). The images show how this frontage is truly opened up by the proposal and an open green space is achieved rather than the dense vegetation that currently prevails. The image at the top of the page shows how the vicarage itself is revealed to public view when passing the site on Darsham Road. The DAS notes that 'The proposal will drastically open-up the frontage of the site, removing the existing overgrown hedge, revealing both the vicarage and the new development to the village. The proposal will be both physically (by footpath) and visually connected to the village.'

The open green space to the front of the site is further enforced as 'The proposed dwellings nearest Darsham Road are set-back from the highway; existing trees to the side of the frontage are retained, and; the area between the proposed dwelling and the highway will be landscaped. This means that on first approach the proposed dwellings are not initially visible but the open landscaping produces a welcoming and subtle hint to what lies beyond.'

#### The Site itself:

It should also be noted that the current visual quality of the land (hidden behind the dense vegetation that bounds the site) is very poor. The vicarage (in a poor state of repair and largely neglected) is rented as a private house and the site itself has been used as a dumping ground for old vehicles and grazing horses (with all of the associated paraphernalia that comes with keeping a horse). The site in its current state is not an open green space of any value to the public (as it is not accessible) or the conservation area (as it cannot be seen). The images below are recently taken examples of this:



In contrast to the site's current state, the Glebe Meadow proposal will create a variety of high quality green open spaces within the development which will be enjoyed by a larger amount of people including the residents themselves, visitors to the site and those walking down Darsham Road. It will positively contribute to the conservation area and people's enjoyment of it.

7. "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."

We note the comments from Historic England and the SPS. Both identify that the proposal impacts the Setting of the Grade 11\* Church, the Vicarage, the existing openness of the proposal site and the conservation area. The SPS have identified the level of harm as 'less than substantial'. Historic England do not identify the level of harm but do say that harm will be caused – from their generally muted response we take this level of harm to match that as described by the SPS. It should be noted that both the SPS's and Historic England's comments are based on the principal of development on the site and do not make comment on how the design of the dwellings and the master-planning impact the heritage assets.

Appendix D \_ Heritage Impact Assessment produced by Bob Kindred provides a comprehensive analysis of the proposal's impact on the surrounding heritage assets. The document goes beyond reviewing the principal of developing the site by also reviewing how the design of the proposed housing and master-planning of the site has been developed to reduce said impact on the heritage assets.

The report agrees with the SPS that the proposal will cause a low level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade 11\* Listed parish Church. It is concluded that this harm is reduced as *"a consequence of the site layout, orientation and scale of the proposed residential units and the existing and proposed landscaping"*

See response to item 12 for analysis of impact on the conservation area

See response to item 13 for analysis of impact on the setting of the church

See response to item 14 for analysis of the harm caused weighed against the public benefit of the proposal.

You will also note that the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich has recently vocalised his enthusiasm and support for the scheme which has been devised in full consultation with the Church who own the site and will continue to own and operate the neighbouring site, the Church.

8. "The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 and Housing and Planning Act 2016 place a duty on local councils in England to keep a register of people who are interested in self build or custom build projects in their area, and give development permissions to meet the demand on that register. Paragraph 61 of the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework requires the Council to plan for a wide choice of homes including those wishing to commission or build their own homes. In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF the Council is addressing this requirement through Local Plan policies.

The Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan (January 2019) 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. The policy requires residential schemes of 100 or more dwellings, to provide at least 5% self or custom-build properties on site through the provision of serviced plots.

In addition to the anticipated delivery to come forward through the specific Self and Custom Build policies in the Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Local Plans, self build plots continue to be delivered through the development management process, supported by other planning policies in the Local Plans. As a result, between 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016 and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019 the permissions granted for self build sites exceed the demand levels from the first 'base year' (up to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016) of the East Suffolk self build register.

Given current delivery rates, and the Local Plan policy requirements (emerging for the former Suffolk Coastal area), there is no justification for approving self build where the proposal does not comply with other policies in the Local Plan. As these comments show, there are a number of conflicts with local plan policies and therefore, in my opinion, there is no justification in this instance for approving self-build housing."

Any Self Build provision of the scheme is identified as a benefit only which should be taken into account when weighing the planning balance.

We argue that the proposal does comply with other policies in the local plan and NPPF as discussed elsewhere in this document.

9. "There are a number of concerns regarding the design and layout of the proposed development. These can be summarised as follows:
- We 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.

We do not understand this comment which would seem to contradict some of the other requirements suggested by the council (i.e. see the case officer's comment in Item 11 of this document).

Of key importance on this frontage is:

- a. Opening-up the frontage to restore some of the open green space in this area
- b. Opening-up the frontage to reveal and 'celebrate' the vicarage building
- c. To bring part of the proposed housing development in front of the vicarage to provide a visual connection into the development and the housing beyond

- d. To provide an open and inviting pedestrian link to the village. It is critical that the scheme is integral and 'open' to the village, and is not hidden behind buildings at the front of the site.
- e. To retain the key trees identified by the tree officer during pre-application advice

The proposal achieves all of these above criteria as can be seen in section 4.5 of the Design and Access Statement.

If more development were to be sited along Darsham Road as suggested by the council's comment then the frontage would be less open, the vicarage would be less visible and some of the key trees would be lost. This would be detrimental to the proposal in our opinion.

- 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.

We believe the proposal does contribute positively to the village street scene. Bringing built forms right up to the front of the site would be detrimental to this on many levels as described above. The 'space' identified around plots 1-5 are intentional and contribute to the openness of the site while emphasising the importance of the vicarage at its centre.

- 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.

We disagree entirely and the evidence of extensive local context analysis and design development can be seen throughout the Design and Access Statement.

In particular see section 4.1 to 4.3

- 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).

Regarding the connection to the countryside please see response to item 6 of this document

Regarding the connection to the village please see response to item 6 of this document

The proposal provides a variety of external spaces for different uses. Some, like the new vicarage avenue (see section 4.4 of the DAS) perform connectivity roles with the village while



others like Church View Avenue perform as a new green street intended to promote social interaction between the residents of Glebe Meadow.

- 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 proposed buildings are intentionally contemporary but pick-up on local context in their materials, form and certain detailing. The designs reflect the new and innovative approach to development and meeting specific local housing needs. Rather than following the traditional terrace vernacular of the village, which we think inappropriate for such a specific scheme, the designs have been developed through in-depth site and context analysis. This can be seen throughout the Design and Access Statement but in particular in sections 4.1 to 4.3.

- 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.

As per the response to the last comment the contemporary form is intentional, derived from site and context analysis and we consider it appropriate for both the type of development being proposed and the site as a whole.

The view from Wash Lane is a key example of this. If the case officer's comments were to be followed they would result in a development similar to that of Clematis Close (the development shown to the left of the image in section 4.7 of the DAS). Clematis Close is highly visible and has a high impact on the landscape when viewed from Wash Lane. To avoid this level of impact, the proposal put forth sits less intrusively in the landscape and as such has been developed in a more subtle manner as shown in the image in section 4.7 of the DAS. The visual impact of the proposed materials are equivalent to that of Phoenix Cottage which is the first existing dwelling shown to the left of the proposal site in the section 4.7 image. The form of the buildings proposed are better proportioned and composed. Overall the impact is far lower.

- 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.

Parking has been a key consideration throughout the development phase and we agree with the comments from the case officer about parking not being a design driver. We also agree that a standard co-housing model can offer alternative methods of dealing with cars and parking, many of which were reviewed as part of the design development stage. However, the final approach is based on factors which are fundamental to this particular



scheme. The proposal is for fully wheelchair user houses for over 65s. The proposal is designed to allow its residents to live in their homes for as long as possible, hence appropriate for wheelchairs, for mobility buggies and for live-in carers. A part of this consideration is the access from the dwellings to a car for wheelchair users and disabled residents. Having the potential for a single car to park adjacent/nearby each dwelling was considered to be appropriate for the type of housing being proposed and the expected residents they will serve. Of course, this is also a requirements of part M4(3) of the building regulations.

This strategy was re-enforced during the public consultations in which local comments identified that parking outside the residence was a key demand, even for non-drivers.

That said, it is absolutely the intention of the CIC for residents to move away from the use of their private motor vehicle. A series of measures are proposed by the scheme and will be put in place to reduce the reliance or requirement for private vehicles. These range from providing facilities on site for residents, to fully wheelchair friendly landscaping and car pooling club and minibuss facilities. Also see parking information in section 4.8 of the DAS.

- 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.

This would appear to be a matter of opinion to which we disagree with. The Parish Council, a large majority of public comments, local and regional councilors and the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich (to name a few) see the innovative value of the proposal and the positive impact on the village that it will have. The layout is carefully considered to put the Social Hub at its centre to encourage sociability and inter-activity, and has been developed to meet the very specific requirements of this site, the surrounding context and the proposed residents.

- The rear street (plots 11-20) ignores the presence of the vicarage and has insufficient relation to it.

The vicarage demands a prominent position on the site, with the majority of open external spaces located around it. This focuses resident's external experiences around the vicarage and promotes social interactions/ gatherings in this area. Church View Avenue is a pedestrian focused 'green' street which flows from and is an extension to the external space around the vicarage. Section 4.6 of the DAS shows and describes these spaces as well as showing the relationship between the housing and the vicarage which we believe to be both well considered and successful.

- In terms of parking, perhaps this can be pepper-potted throughout any layout.

We believe the parking design to be both well considered and appropriate for the site and proposed user group. See previous responses on parking. It is hoped that over time individual parking requirements will reduce as residents gain confidence in shared mobility facilities which enhance their independence.

- 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.

See previous comments for our response to this regarding built form.

- Could a connection into the adjoining churchyard would have helped overcome the sense that this development is disconnected from its neighbours.

This is a distinct possibility and has been addressed through the layout design. Potential connections include off the end of Church View Avenue (see image in the top right of section 4.6 of the DAS) and from the footway that extends from the Southerly door of the vicarage, past the front of Plot 5 and into the church yard.

- The volume of this development represents a large number of dwellings in the contrasting style presented here for Westleton.

The style and form of proposed development has been responded to elsewhere in this document

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."

Thank you for acknowledging the quality of the proposed housing.

10. "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."

See response to item 11

11. "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 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."

Regarding the conservation area please see response to item 12

Regarding the Open Green Space please see response to item 6

Thank you for acknowledging the benefit of retaining, refurbishing and repurposing the vicarage

Regarding the Vicarage:

Paragraph 4.47 to 4.53 of 'Appendix D \_ Heritage Impact Assessment' notes the 'council has identified the former Vicarage within the site as making a contribution to Westleton notwithstanding its present almost complete seclusion from the road, the churchyard and surrounding public footpaths'. It provides a description of the building which is not listed but can be considered of local importance and identifies the fact that the proposal will reveal this asset to the village by opening up the street frontage as described in this excerpt from paragraph 4.53:

'The former Vicarage is to be retained on the site and is intended to be a central focal point and social hub of the residents. An existing, large red brick and pantiled potting shed to the north of the Vicarage is also to be retained and converted to ancillary artistic uses and as a plant potting shed for the site. Large trees that appear to have been extant in the late 19th century are also to be retained as set out in Sections 2.6 and 2.9.1 of the Design & Access Statement.'

In section 5.34 of the HIA it is also noted that "In paragraph 202, the NPPF recommends that local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the dis-benefits of departing from those policies. It is considered that the proposed change of use and refurbishment of the Vicarage and its immediate curtilage would support that objective."

Thank you for acknowledging the benefit of how the proposed layout will open up the front of the site and reveal the vicarage to the public.

We believe these design decisions to represent key public benefits of the proposal.

12. "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."

Paragraphs 4.23 to 4.40 of 'Appendix D \_ Heritage Impact Assessment' provide a detailed description of the Conservation area and the council adopted 'Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan' [CAAMP]

Section 5.31 to 5.38 of the HIA assesses the proposals impact on the conservation area of the village.

In particular it notes that the site and the vicarage is currently concealed behind a dense frontage of foliage. The existing 'openness' of the site can therefore not be discerned from any publicly accessible point. The development proposes to open up this frontage to reveal the vicarage to public view. The centre of the approach to the site is purposefully kept open with housing down either flank to promote the importance of the vicarage at its centre and to provide a truly open area of green space in the foreground and along the route to the vicarage. The report concludes that "*it is therefore considered that in relation to the character and appearance of the conservation area in general and the specific character when seen from the public realm in Darsham Road, the proposals would have no material detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area*".

Paragraph 5.38 continues to say: "*The scheme would have the potential to better reveal the significance of the site and raise the standard of design of small rural residential buildings for local people of more advanced age, in line with the objectives of both Section 12 and Section 16 of the NPPF [02-2019] and also in meeting the objectives of the Framework more widely.*"

Also see our response to item 6 of this document which explores the proposal's impact on views from public accessible areas.

These themes are explored and described in sections 4.5 to 4.7 of the DAS

13. "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."

Appendix D \_ Heritage Impact Assessment reviews the significance of the heritage assets surrounding the site in great depth – see section titles 'Impact and Significance' starting from paragraph 4.60.

It identifies the significance of the Church of St Peter (Grade 2\*) would be assessed as 'Good' - possibly along with the conservation area (presupposing the 'very strong character' – otherwise 'Medium/Moderate'; while the significance of the remaining Grade 2 Listed buildings would be assessed as 'Medium/Moderate' and the undesignated buildings of special local interest would be assessed as 'Low'

The proposal's impact on the setting of the church is analysed at great length in paragraph 5.12 to 5.22 of Appendix D \_ Heritage Impact Assessment.

It identifies the key views between the site and the church as well as where both are seen together and it looks at how the proposal's design helps mitigate impact.

In paragraph 5.19 of the HIA it is also considered that the 'spaciousness proposed at the centre of the intended site layout would help to limit the anticipated, if localised, visual impact on the setting of the church from both directions.'

In paragraph 5.22 it concludes that; 'It is therefore considered that as a consequence of the site layout, orientation and scale of the proposed residential units and the existing and proposed landscaping, the scheme would amount to a **low level** of less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade 2\* Listed parish church.'

This low level of less than substantial harm has been identified from the outset and is in line with the comments from HE and SPS. It is a key consideration and should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. See our response to paragraph 14 for an analysis of this.

14. "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."

It should be noted that in addition to their comments regarding the impact on heritage assets, the "SPS fully endorses the provision of housing where it supports a demonstrated local need, in this case housing for the over 65 age group, and understand the desire to create a cohousing community including some communal facilities within the vicarage" and they also "fully endorse the use of contemporary design, which places a high value upon creating a strong sense of place while respecting local distinctiveness, and the proposals to reuse the Vicarage Building."

Both the SPS and Historic England recognise that the scheme brings forward potential benefits and both recognise that the decision should be based on a balance between the benefits provided against the potential harm caused.

A wide range and variety of benefits are described throughout the DAS and appendices of the application.

It is our opinion that the proposal provides significant benefits to the local community and wider area and the scheme would be an exemplar in terms of its approach to community and communal living as well as its sustainability and health credentials, all of which outweigh the identified low level of less than substantial harm potentially caused by the scheme.

However, in recognition of the concerns raised above, and of those regarding boundary treatment raised by some adjoining neighbours, we propose that if the application is to be approved a condition should be added requiring the agreement of a detailed landscaping design including all boundary treatments by the council prior to any development taking place. As part of this landscape design we would work with the neighbours, SPS and Historic England to further enhance the landscaping proposal to further reduce the development's impact on the surrounding heritage assets. Said landscape plan would also include the ecological mitigations and enhancements already proposed and develop the tree strategy proposed.



**Our response (originally sent to the council via email on 02-09-2019) to a comment on appropriateness of sites in Phil Perkin's email dated 23/08/2019:**

*(First the case officer's comment is highlighted in red and then our response follows in black.)*

"I am afraid that I can find no compelling reasons in the application why housing should be permitted on this site when other sites considered more appropriate have been identified through the local plan process."

I question how you have come to the conclusion that the Glebe Meadow site is 'less appropriate' than those proposed to be allocated in the emerging local plan. My understanding is that the Glebe Meadow site was 'reviewed' in the Draft SHELAA in July 2018 (note this is over a year ago). Speaking with a member of the Policy team they explained (as does the SHELAA itself) that a call for sites was previously undertaken in the autumn of 2016 and a further call for sites in August 2017. The Glebe Meadow site was identified in the 2016 call for sites but as there had been no contact to the council from the land owner it was classified as 'unavailable' as described in paragraph 2.13 of the draft SHELAA. Note that it is stated that sites identified as unavailable 'have not been assessed further at this stage'. This raises two issues; Firstly, the site originally identified 3 years ago was deemed unavailable and no account is made for the site's current availability; secondly, no assessment of the site's appropriateness has been made by the council.

Availability – The site is clearly now available as this application has been forthcoming. Not only is it available but a realistic and progressive scheme has been presented to the council for their consideration at this time. This project is deliverable within the following 2 years unlike any site allocation in the emerging local plan which may or may not be deliverable at some point in the plan's length.

Appropriateness – The Glebe Meadow site has not been assessed for its appropriateness by the council and therefore there is no evidence to say it is less appropriate than any of the proposed site allocations in the emerging local plan. In fact, the independent representation made by the Westleton Parish Council (WPC) argues the contrary.

*(see '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.' which has been submitted as a representation on the planning application in question on 23/08/2019 under the title 'Town/Parish Consultation Response').*

The representation provides evidence that:

- a. Para 5. - [The Glebe Meadow site]... has 'the support of WPC and most local people'
- b. Para 16 to 18. – The WPC concludes that the Glebe Meadow site has less visual impact and better site containment than that of the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan.
- c. Para 19 to 21 & Para 34. – The WPC concludes that the Glebe Meadow site is available and will deliver an identified local need. The WPC questions the clarity and certainty of the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan and note that only a small percentage will be affordable with the majority being open market with no requirement for them to be sized for local needs.
- d. Para 22. – The WPC note the potential high cost of infrastructure that would be required to service the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan and that any developer could reasonably argue that any affordable allocation is not viable. The Glebe Meadow site will deliver all housing designed to an identified local need.
- e. Para 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 (Glebe Meadow) and 2 rather than the market led sites proposed in the Local Plan."*

- f. Para 25. – The WPC raise concerns with the ecological impact of developing the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan. On the Glebe Meadow site we are committed to both mitigating the impact on ecology and providing further enhancements, note we advocate the use of conditions to ensure this happens.
- g. Para 27. – The WPC has identified flooding and drainage issues with the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan. The Glebe Meadow site had provided a full drainage strategy as part of the application and there are no flooding concerns.
- h. Para 28 – 32. The WPC address the question of access and pedestrian footways. The Glebe Meadow site is identified as 'on a quiet road in the centre of the village' which boasts good pedestrian connectivity to the village. On the other hand the WPC identifies concerns with the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan. The site under Policy 12.69 would require essential footway improvements on the busy B1125 where the highest vehicle speeds are recorded in the village. The carriageway is at its narrowest at the entrance to this proposed site so it is likely that major road widening would be required. There are concerns over whether this expansion of the highway and footway would be possible due to private land ownership on the west side of the highway. If the footway were to be on the east side the WPC have concerns with pedestrians crossing the busy road at this point. Fundamentally the WPC think that the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan '*cannot meet the test in NPPF paragraph 108 section b) that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.*'
- i. It should be noted that the report concludes that the emerging local plan site allocation under 'Policy 12.69 is unsound within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework'

The evidence supplied above by the WPC is very compelling and shows that not only is the Glebe Meadow site appropriate for development, it is far more appropriate than that of the site of Policy 12.69 of the Emerging Local Plan

Therefore, as in reality the Glebe Meadow site is both available and more appropriate than those identified through the local plan process, I hope you agree that 'compelling reasons' have been provided.

In addition, the Glebe Meadow proposal would be delivered in the next 2 years and it will supply housing of a vastly greater level of quality, specification and sustainability in comparison to a standard developer led site.

However, if for any reason you are in disagreement with the above, it should also be noted that the site allocations being put forth in the Emerging Local Plan are a minimum requirement for the council to achieve its housing supply. The Plan also relies on Windfall sites. The SHELAA states that: "*Windfall sites are sites which have not been specifically identified as part of the Local Plan process. This could include a range of sites from brownfield sites becoming available through relocation / closure of existing uses, conversions or development in accordance with countryside policies.*" [...] and an allowance for windfall sites has been calculated in the housing supply justification: "*based on monitoring information, windfall contributions are therefore counted as 50 per year from 2020/21 onwards.*". The Glebe Meadow proposal could be considered to deliver some of this 'windfall' in both a high quality and socially responsible manner.

**Conclusion:**

The Glebe Meadow proposal goes beyond that of just meeting local housing requirements. It also considers how housing can be designed in a manner to promote community, communal activities and tackle loneliness in older generations; it retains, refurbishes and finds a new lease of life for the vicarage, a building of noted historic value; it fully integrates the new housing into the heart of Westleton village; it reflects the highest quality of architectural design and it employs cutting edge methods of construction, fully integrated intelligent house systems and the use of eco-friendly and healthy natural materials.

We hope the council can take a balanced approach to decision making. We have demonstrated the multitude of benefits of this scheme which we consider greatly outweigh any harm caused. The Parish Council's and majority of local resident's support should also be noted.

It is intended that this proposal should lead the way in providing age appropriate housing requirements locally and is one that we hope the council will both see the benefit of and be proud of.