

Committee Report

Item No: 1

Reference: DC/17/06326

Case Officer: Alex Scott

Ward: Fressingfield.

Ward Member/s: Cllr Lavinia Hadingham.

RECOMMENDATION – REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION

Description of Development

Outline Planning Application. Demolition of existing buildings and construction of residential development (110 dwellings), conversion of existing public house to a flexible use of A1 (retail), A3 (Cafe), A4 (Public House) and D1 (Community Space/Day Nursery), public open space, drainage infrastructure and vehicular access.

Location

Crown Farm , The Street, Weybread , IP21 5TP

Parish: Weybread

Expiry Date: 31/08/2018

Application Type: OUT - Outline Planning Application

Development Type: Major Large Scale - Dwellings

Applicant: Crown Chicken Ltd

Agent: Freeths

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason/s:

It is a “Major” application for:

- a residential land allocation for 15 or more dwellings

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit

None

Has a Committee Call In request been received from a Council Member?

No

Details of Pre-Application Advice

Pre application advice was given by your planning officers in October 2017 (Reference: 1578/17) which indicated support for the principle of the redevelopment of the existing factory site, subject to acceptable detail and assessment of all material planning considerations.

PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of Policies

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework
FC01 - Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development
FC01_1 - Mid Suffolk Approach To Delivering Sustainable Development
FC02 - Provision And Distribution Of Housing
FC03 - Supply Of Employment Land
CS01 - Settlement Hierarchy
CS02 - Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages
CS03 - Reduce Contributions to Climate Change
CS04 - Adapting to Climate Change
CS05 - Mid Suffolk's Environment
CS06 – Services and Infrastructure
CS07 - Brown Field Target
CS09 - Density and Mix
GP01 - Design and layout of development
H4 - A proportion of Affordable Housing in new housing developments
H7 - Restricting Housing Development unrelated to the needs of the countryside
H13 - Design and layout of housing development
H14 - A range of house types to meet different accommodation needs
H15 - Development to reflect local characteristics
H16 - Protecting existing residential amenity
H17 - Keeping residential development away from pollution
HB1 - Protection of Historic Buildings
HB08 - Safeguarding the character of conservation areas
HB14 – Ensuring Archaeological remains are not destroyed
CL08 - Protecting wildlife habitats
E6 – Retention of Individual Industrial and Commercial Sites
T02 - Minor Highway improvements
T09 - Parking Standards
T10 - Highway Considerations in Development
RT04 - Amenity open space and play areas within residential development

Consultations and Representations

During the course of the application Consultation and Representations from third parties have been received. These are summarised below.

A: Summary of Consultations

Weybread Parish Council – Weybread Parish Council wishes to lodge a strong objection to the number of dwellings (110) proposed for this application. If approved this would result in a 60% increase in the number of properties in the whole of the parish and 175% increase in the number of properties on The Street. Additionally, Weybread Parish Council would ask for the following comments to be taken into consideration:

Financial viability – We challenge the economic arguments put forward to justify such a big development. The large cost to decontaminate the site seems excessive and even if a large problem exists, this cost should be paid by the polluter business, and not by the justification of more building plots.

Brownfield/ Greenfield – Weybread Parish Council strongly objects to development on the Green Field Land. This land is not in the current or proposed new council structure plan for development. The Greenfield land on the Crown Chicken site has been growing arable crops until ownership passed to Cranswick; indeed it was last cropped with wheat in autumn 2016 and was registered with, & received payment from, the governments Rural Payments Agency.

Village assets – Weybread Parish Council believes the developers should offer some assets for the village – currently only St Andrew’s Church and the Village Hall are considered village assets. The church will be sufficient to meet the needs of additional parishioners but the current village hall will not. The size of the current village hall limits the number of occupants. Conversion of the public house is not considered an asset as it will entail volunteers to run the various options suggested. If nobody is willing to volunteer, the public house will simply be an empty building owned by Crown Chicken. Therefore we would ask that under any Section 106 agreement with the council that the greenfield land on the west of the proposed site not be housing but be gifted as open space, playing field, with new village hall.

Public house conversion to A1, A2, A3, A4 and D1/access – Whatever the flexible use decision made on the former Crown Public House it requires sufficient curtilage around it to make it successful and allow sufficient car parking space to avoid on road parking which should include disabled parking spaces at the front of the building. Safe access must be assured. Especially if the conversion includes a Day Nursery. Other than these points, there is no objection to the proposed uses.

Infrastructure/Medical centre/school/broadband – It is understood that due to the overspill of primary school aged children from Harleston (as the result of extensive house building in the town), the Reception Class at Fressingfield school – the nearest primary school to Weybread – is now closed for new intake. Medical Centres in both Fressingfield and Harleston are full. Local employment is limited therefore better Broadband provision must be assured for those wishing or needing to work from home.

Highways/Transport – Apart from one bus per week (to Harleston/Norwich and return) there is no public transport serving Weybread. There is concern that the considerably increased number of vehicles exiting the site onto The Street would become a safety issue due to the fact that there are no proposed pavements at the site exit, no cycle lane and no provision for a safe stopping place for the School Bus. The Parish Council would propose the creation of a pavement along the front of the site to the Crown Pub and provision of a bus stop off the main highway. We request these safety issues are reviewed and given due consideration.

Sewerage – There is concern the current sewerage system may be too old and fragile to take extra sewerage from the development and also that proposed in Fressingfield.

Surface Water – Surface water drainage from the Crown Chicken site is limited to a 300mm pipe that leaves the site and travels in an easterly direction (not NNW as per the Plandescil Flood Risk Assessment). This 300mm pipe goes underground for in excess of 250m; it crosses the road and passes through residential property before reaching an open ditch network to the east. This network takes, in addition to the Crown Chicken site, water from 15 residential properties and 40+ hectares of under drained agricultural land up hill and to the south of the proposed site.

Environmental/ecological – We believe the study carried out was not substantial enough and was carried out at the wrong time of the year when ponds and ditches were dry. It is common knowledge that there are frequent sitings of crested newts and bats – plural – not just one bat as mentioned in the survey. We request this point is noted.

Historical/archeological – Weybread is situated on a Roman Road. Many artefacts have been found locally and actual specimens are displayed at The Paddocks, Church Road.

Grade II Listed Buildings – Greystone House and Fir Tree Farm are both adjacent to the proposed site.

It is the general opinion of Weybread Parish Councillors that some limited development in Weybread could re-generate the village and its community. With this in mind the plans and proposals of this application have been fully reviewed and we request that these resultant comments and observations be taken into consideration.

SCC – Local Highway Authority – No unacceptable impacts on highway safety, however, do not consider the site is a sustainable location from a transport policy perspective:

The NPPF focuses on the importance of promoting sustainable transport and give priority to public transport, pedestrian and cycle movements. We have concerns regarding the number of trips created by the development. Although the transport Assessment shows the net increase compared to the sites previous use causes no intensification, at present there are limited means of sustainable transport for this site:

- There is a limited bus service in Weybread; insufficient for a mode of transport for commuting for work, travelling to further education or medical appointments, therefore, there will be a great reliance on the private car;
- The catchment primary school is approximately 2 miles and the secondary school is approx.12 miles from the site. As there is no safe walking route to school, there will be a need to provide transport for school pupils;
- SCC Community Transport Team were unable to identify any suitable measures that would benefit the Mid-Suffolk Connecting Communities service in the wider area.

We have reviewed the Transport Assessment and the data supplied with this application, the summary of our findings are as follows:

The maximum 85thile speed recorded on The Street adjacent to the site is 37mph and the required visibility for the access on the highway can be met. The estimated total additional vehicle trips in the AM peak hour is 11 vehicles and PM peak hour is 23 vehicles (compared to previous site use) therefore the additional vehicles from the development will not have a severe impact on the surrounding road and junctions. There is one slight and injury accident recorded on The Street therefore there are no specific highway safety concerns in the vicinity of the site. The proposed mitigation for additional footway construction improves access to the north of the village for cyclists and pedestrians.

Taking all the above into account, it is our opinion that this development should not be prevented or refused on highways grounds as there are no unacceptable impacts on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would not be severe (paragraph 109 NPPF). However, SCC does not consider this site as a sustainable location from a transport policy perspective.

Highways England – No objection.

Environment Agency – No objection subject to conditions – Have reviewed the submitted report from the applicant's agent, dated 9 July 2018 and are satisfied tha the development will be connected to mains foul drainage.

With regards the social media video produced by the Tree Warden (which raised concern with regards surface water drainage and potential flood risk issues in the area surrounding the site): Consider the local lead flood authority are better placed to provide comments in this case as it seems to address surface water flooding comments.

BMSDC Land Contamination – No objection to the proposed development, but would recommend that the following planning condition be attached to any planning permission. Proposed condition – standard contamination land condition.

BMSDC Environment Health – No objection in principle to this application, but some concerns about the likelihood of loss of amenity to surrounding residential dwellings during the demolition and construction phases of the development and would recommend conditions.

BMSDC Environment Protection (Sustainability) – While we do not object to the proposed use of the site and it is acknowledged that the application is for outline permission but considering the number of dwellings proposed some consideration of this topic area is expected. This council is keen to encourage consideration of sustainability issues at an early stage so that most environmentally friendly buildings are constructed and the inclusion of sustainable techniques, materials, technology etc can be incorporated into the scheme without compromising the overall viability.

As these items have not been addressed the recommendation is refusal, should the planning department consider setting conditions to ensure the development meets its environmental obligations the following is suggested.

SCC – Local Lead Flood Authority – The following submitted documents have been reviewed and we recommend approval of this application subject to conditions:

- Site Location Plan Ref 16-L27-PL503
- Existing Site Plan Ref 16-L27-PL502
- Weybread Masterplan Ref 7758-L-01
- Flood Risk Assessment & Surface Water Drainage Strategy Ref 22708 Rev 0
- A Phase I Desk Study Report Ref MSH/17.382/Phase1
- Letter from Freeths 9th July 2018 ref MBA/2003/2129287/1 o Appendix B- Drainage Response

Having reviewed the social media video produced by the Tree Warden (which raised concern with regards surface water drainage and potential flood risk issues in the area surrounding the site): suggest that the LPA presents this to the applicant and asks them to satisfy the LPA that the watercourse that they propose to discharge into flows to an OS mapped watercourse.

BMSDC Heritage – The Heritage Team considers that the proposal would cause no harm to the setting of a designated heritage asset because the proposed residential development might mitigate some of the negative effects of the existing factory on the setting of the grade II listed building.

BMSDC Economic Development – The applicant has met with Mid Suffolk Economic Development Team from initial project proposal, these meetings, including pre-application discussions with Planning DM, have been very helpful to understand requirements of both the applicant and the local community regarding eventual redevelopment of this rural employment site. The Economic Development Team therefore support redevelopment of this site subject to the discussion items. It is recommended that any employment use is compatible with residential as enabling development is expected to be required for the scheme viability. In addition we would recommend that amenity of both business and residential are considered in any future design.

BMSDC Landscape (Place Services) – Recommend landscape strategy – Although we agree with the agent that our consultation response suggests there are no concerns 'in principle' to a development on the site, we do however feel it is necessary for a landscape strategy to be produced. This would set out the landscape principles for any future development, proposed at reserved matters stage. This could be part of a design code document or a standalone document that is prepared and submitted as part of a planning condition on the outline permission.

BMSDC Ecology (Place Services) – No objection – Subject to condition:

We have reviewed the report addressing Mid Suffolk's Consultee comments (Freeths LLP, July 2018), provided by the applicant. This includes the provision of a Great Crested Newt Working Method Statement (FPCR, July 2018), which has been completed as a response to Suffolk Wildlife Trusts comments (February 2018).

We have reviewed the Great Crested Newt Working Method Statement (FPCR, July 2018). This includes appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that the likelihood of Great Crested Newts being affected during the construction phase will be minimalised.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust – Concern with regards impact of potentially contaminated surface water on the County Wildlife Site at Weybread Pits:

We note the additional information provided by the applicant (letter from Freeths of 9th July 2018) partly in relation to our letter of 8th February 2018. This includes a Great Crested Newt Method Statement (FPCR), detailing the proposed construction mitigation methods for this species. Whilst the methods proposed appear to follow industry good practice, we query whether the Method Statement was prepared following the report of great crested newts adjacent to the site (our e-mail of 24th May 2018) and has taken this into account?

We also note that it is proposed to dispose of surface water from the site via a ditch connection to Weybread Pits. Whilst it is understood that any discharge would be at an attenuated rate, the pits are designated as a County Wildlife Site (CWS) and we are therefore concerned about the potential for discharge of surface water from the development to result in an adverse impact on the CWS. Although there appears to be a reasonable distance between the application site and Weybread Pits, we query what measures will be put in place to ensure that potentially contaminated surface water cannot reach the CWS? Also, we query whether any potential ecological impacts on the ditch, resulting from increased flows, have been assessed?

Natural England – Do not wish to make comment.

BMSDC Arboricultural – No objection in principle to this proposal subject to it being undertaken in accordance with the protection measures outlined in the accompanying arboricultural report.

BMSDC Strategic Housing - This development triggers Local Plan Amended Policy H4 and therefore up to 35% affordable housing would be required on this site. Based on 110 dwellings 38 units of affordable housing would be sought. However due regard needs to be taken to the location of this site and access to public transport, school and amenities.

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Strategic Housing Market Assessment confirms a continuing need for housing across all tenures and a growing need for affordable housing. The most recent update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, completed in 2017 confirms a minimum need of 94 affordable homes per annum.

The most recent version of the SHMA specifies an affordable housing mix equating to 41% for 1 bed units, 40% 2 bed units, 16% 3 bed units and 3% 4+ bed units. Actual delivery requested will reflect management practicalities and existing stock in the local area, together with local housing needs data and requirements.

The Council's Choice Based Lettings system currently has circa. 980 applicants registered for the Mid Suffolk area.

It is considered good practice not to develop a large number of affordable dwellings in one location within a scheme and therefore it is recommended that no more than 15 affordable dwellings should be located in any one part of the development.

Our 2014 Housing Needs Survey shows that there is a need across all tenures for smaller units of accommodation, which includes accommodation suitable for older people, wishing to downsize from larger privately-owned family housing, into smaller privately-owned apartments, bungalows and houses.

It would also be appropriate for any open market apartments and smaller houses on the site to be designed and developed to Lifetime-Homes standards, making these attractive and appropriate for older people.

Affordable Housing Requirements for Weybread:

35% of units = 38 affordable units – on-site provision is not considered to be the best option in this instance due to the limited public transport, access to local facilities and amenities.

An Affordable Housing Commuted sum will be sought in lieu of on-site affordable housing provision.

Calculated amount is based on the property mix profile we would have required if on-site provision secured. Mix if on site is detailed.

Total Commuted sum is averaged out across 38 rented and shared ownership dwellings = £76,142.28 per dwelling, but would require the correct calculated amount per property type. This is a total of £2,893,406.73.

Rented = 28 dwellings	4 x 1 bed 2-person flats @ 50 sqm
	6 x 2 bed 4-person flats @ 70 sqm
	2 x 2 bed 4-person bungalows @ 70 sqm
	12 x 2 bed 4-person houses @ 79 sqm
	4 x 3 bed 5-person houses @ 93 sqm
Shared Ownership = 10 dwellings	7 x 2 bed 4-person houses @ 79 sqm
	3 x 3 bed 5-person houses @ 93 sqm

35% of commuted sum to be paid on completion of 20th open market home, 70% of commuted sum by the completion of the 65th open market dwelling and the remainder by the completion of the 90th open market dwelling.

The open market mix should reflect the needs as shown from the Suffolk Housing Survey 2014. The population of Suffolk is ageing and so there is a need for housing supply to be suitable for older people wishing to downsize and well as for younger people trying to get on the housing ladder. Therefore, we would like to see the inclusion of some 2 bed roomed bungalows or chalet bungalows that would reflect demand in the local area.

There is already a large percentage of properties that are 3 and 4 bed + properties which amounts to 68.4% of the existing properties in Weybread. There is a significant need for smaller units of accommodation and particularly 2 bed dwellings.

Commuted sum payable = £49,000 per 1 bed flat unit

Total commuted sum for 4 units = £196,000

Commuted sum payable = £78,576.58 per 2 bed house unit

Total commuted sum for 19 units = £1,492,955.02

Commuted sum payable = £69,644.75 per 2 bed bungalow and 2 bed flat unit

Total commuted sum for 8 units = £557, 158

Commuted sum payable = £92,470.53 per 3 bed house unit
Total commuted sum for 7 units = £647,293.71

Total commuted sum if averaged out across 38 rented and shared ownership dwellings = £76,142.28 per dwelling, but would require the correct calculated amount per property type. This is a total of £2,893,406.73.

BMSDC Waste Management – No objection subject to condition.

NHS England – The proposal comprises a development of 110 residential dwellings, which is likely to have an impact on the NHS funding programme for the delivery of primary healthcare provision within this area and specifically within the health catchment of the development. NHS England would therefore expect these impacts to be fully assessed and mitigated by way of a developer contribution secured through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

There is 1 main GP practice within a 3km radius of the proposed development, Fressingfield Surgery (including its branch at Stradbroke). This GP practice does not have sufficient capacity for the additional growth resulting from this development and known cumulative development growth in the area. Therefore a developer contribution, via CIL processes, towards the capital funding to increase capacity within the GP Catchment Area would be sought to mitigate the impact.

NHS England and the CCG look forward to working with the applicant and the Council to satisfactorily address the issues raised in this consultation response.

SCC Archaeological – There are no grounds to consider refusal of permission in order to achieve preservation in situ of any important heritage assets. However, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 141), any permission granted should be the subject of a planning condition to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage asset before it is damaged or destroyed.

SCC Fire & Rescue – Have been inspected by the Water Officer who has made comments related to access and fire fighting facilities and water supplies.

SCC Rights of Way – Public footpaths 14 and 18 run adjacent to the north west and south east of the proposed development area providing access to the wider countryside to the west and in the case of FP 18, a link to the Street. The masterplan does not provide sufficient good linkages to these rights of way. The outline masterplan shows a pedestrian link from the site onto Footpath no 14 on the north-west boundary, providing a link onto the Street (B1116). However, this public footpath is not actually available on the ground at The Street due to it being mapped within a pond and hence the link from the site would not make a connection to The Street. An alternative link should be provided from The Street possibly via a green corridor or by an alternative route back to The Street. Public footpath 18 is adjacent to the south east boundary of the site and there should be a link from the site onto this footpath. This would enable a short circular walk from The Street using public footpath no18, the greenspace within the site and the green corridor link back to The Street and to the countryside to the west.

SCC Strategic Development Contributions – Currently forecast to have no surplus places at the Sixth Form High School however this can be addressed via a future bid for CIL funding. The application site is remote from services and we will have no primary school places available within statutory safe walking distance. It would not be sustainable to bus children as young as five around the district. Developer funding for school transport would not be in perpetuity and would not overcome the other disbenefits of transporting pupils. It is considered that it will be possible to designate places, more sustainable development would be from development abutting Fressingfield's settlement boundary where children could walk to school.

If this proposed development is granted planning permission this situation is going to be wholly unsatisfactory from education point of view and in County Council's view this scale growth in such a remote location is not sustainable.

It is recognised that the District Council faces an issue about identifying adequate housing land. The County Council considers that it is a matter for the District Council to balance the needs for the release of new housing site with the risks associated with the emergence of a possibly unsustainable pattern of school provision. In this context it leaves it to the District Council to draw the planning balance considering these and all other relevant matters.

Makes specific comments regarding waste, libraries, supported housing, CIL, legal costs and broadband also.

South Norfolk Council – No additional comments to make at this stage.

Suffolk Preservation Society – Register our objection to the outline planning application for 110 dwellings at Weybread. The Society fully supports the redevelopment of brownfield land for residential use but has serious concerns regarding the excessive number of dwellings proposed in this small village and the significant proportion of greenfield land to be developed. Furthermore the Society is disappointed to note that there are no affordable houses proposed which would directly benefit the local community.

B: Representations

A total of 47 third party representations have been received during the course of determination of the application. Comments received are summarised below:

- Support use of Brownfield land, however do not support use of greenfield land
 - Object to the use of "Green Belt" for the majority of the proposed housing
 - In favour of factory being developed as housing
 - A reduced number of houses would be more suitable for the village
 - Request that new housing is affordable for first time buyers
 - A development of this scale in a village isolated from services and facilities is unsustainable
 - There are no services and facilities in Weybread to support a development of this scale
 - Education facilities in the area are already at capacity - Fressingfield school is not in a position to expand
 - Lack of public transport in Weybread means that future occupants would be totally car dependant
 - A development this scale would create at least 200 car journeys per day.
 - Electricity, water, sewerage and telecommunications services in Weybread are not sufficient for a development of this scale
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- There are no social or affordable properties proposed as part of the development – this is not acceptable, particularly for a development of this size
 - There is a need for this to enable local families to stay where they were brought up and have family support - this will not be possible due to no affordable housing being proposed
 - To increase the size of the village by over 50% is not acceptable and would significantly affect the character of the village and the way it functions
 - Consider the proposal would destroy Weybread's existing street frontage
 - No application of this size should be supported without a Weybread Parish Plan in place
 - Support proposed re-use of Pub as a community facility – however question who would take this on and operate it
 - Whilst the development of The Crown public house for community use would be desirable, the fact should not be overlooked that it has consistently failed to be a viable business.
 - Consider the viability assessment put forward by the applicants is flawed and consider the land has been overvalued by almost twice.
 - The proposal would not protect and preserve our rural landscape
 - Consider there are more than enough brownfield site in the area to meet the district's housing needs
 - The proposal, if approved would set a dangerous precedent for other development in the area which want to: encroach into greenfield land around brownfield land; develop within unsustainable villages; and build lots of houses without any affordable housing provision.
 - There is not much employment in Weybread and if/when the factory goes new families would need to travel miles to find employment.
 - Consider more should be done to develop the site for Employment related uses, at least in part
 - Each proposed household would have 2 cars probably 3. There will not be enough parking for these cars as the houses will all be crammed into small plots.
 - Agree that housing would be preferable to the factory which does emit some horrendous smells and noise and HGV usage would be reduced but it should only be on the brownfield site.
 - This development should be taken in context with the other applications in our neighbouring village of Fressingfield, which will put undue pressure on those same facilities.
 - Concern with regards damage that will be caused by additional members of the public walking, exercising dogs and disturbing wildlife on nearby grazing land.
 - Concern with regards the resultant impact on ecology, particularly Great Crested Newts.
 - Concerned how additional volumes of surface water from hard standings will exit the site through the small existing pipe work.
 - There is an ongoing speeding problem in the village
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-Traffic would be no more than it is at present as would eliminate a lot of the HGVs that come in and out of the village for most of the day and night.

-Road accidents at the numerous accident black spots in Weybread from 2013 have risen and accidents have become more serious. Lorries cannot stay on their side of the road when entering the B1116 from Wells Road. Lorries enter the B1116 from a junction on a blind bend with the passage of view blocked on the south side of this junction. Lorries stray around the 3 bends coming up from Shotford Bridge into Weybread.

-Damage to the road edges and verges and the formation of pot holes and crushed drains is considerable as many sections of the B1116 in Weybread are not wide enough for two artic lorries to pass side by side.

-Concerned about street lighting which would come with a housing development. Part of Weybread's charm and character is that it is a dark village with no street lighting and tourists seek locations with dark skies away from light pollution.

-Building houses without creating corresponding local jobs goes against the sustainability driven housing targets set in the Local Plan by Mid Suffolk and as set out in part 3 of the NPPF.

-Until recent times it was not possible for any new build in Weybread (except for an extension or building on an existing footprint). When has this changed to make it suitable for over 100 new houses?

-The Council is unable to meet its unrealistic land allocation targets and so is rushing through and granting inappropriate developments such as this to try and plug the gaps.

PLANNING HISTORY

REF: 2327/15	Erection of new and extended cold store buildings, loading docks, HGV turning area, equipment room extension, internal alterations, additional car parking and relocation of gas tanks and emergency water supply.	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0317/11	Retention of extension to chicken processing unit.	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0784/87	Erection of extension to canteen (serving poultry packing plant)	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0449/90	ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING POULTRY PROCESSING FACTORY.	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0105/99/	ERECTION OF ENCLOSURE OF LORRY COVER TO FORM MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP. (PREVIOUSLY PERMITTED UNDER PLANNING PERMISSION REF 965/94).	DECISION: GTD

REF: 0964/94/	ERECTION OF POULTRY LAIRAGE & EXTENSION TO HANG ON BAY. (FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF PORCH AND WORKSHOP ON SITE.	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0831/89	ERECTION OF LORRY PORT	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0104/99	ERECTION OF POULTRY LAIRAGE AND EXTENSION TO HANG ON BAY. (FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF PORCH AND WORKSHOP ON SITE. (PREVIOUSLY PERMITTED UNDER PLANNING PERMISSION REF 964/94).	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0975/89	ERECT HOUSING TO TREATMENT PLANT	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0830/89	ERECTION OF LOADING COVER TO EXISTING LOADING BAY	DECISION: GTD
REF: 1069/93	ERECTION OF EXTENSION TO EXISTING POULTRY PROCESSING FACTORY	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0966/94	ALTERATIONS TO VEHICULAR ACCESS, TO FORM ENTRANCE FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY.	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0200/95	EXTENSION TO CHILLER ROOM	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0106/99	ALTERATIONS TO VEHICULAR ACCESS TO FORM ENTRANCE FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY. (PREVIOUSLY PERMITTED UNDER PLANNING PERMISSION REF 966/94).	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0965/94	ERECTION OF ENCLOSURE OF LORRY COVER TO FORM MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP.	DECISION: GTD
REF: 0414/90	USE OF LAND FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW CAR/LORRY PARK.	DECISION: GTD

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1. The Site and Surroundings

- 1.1. The site comprises 6.98ha of land in total over an irregular shaped parcel of land situated on the south side of The Street in the village of Weybread.
- 1.2. Approximately 2.1ha of the site is brownfield land which is currently being used as a processing facility for Crown Chicken. This site has been used for poultry processing since 1951, although

has grown significantly over time. The site also includes a vacant public house (The Crown Inn) which occupies circa 0.1ha of the site.

- 1.3. The remaining 4.78 ha is greenfield land in agricultural use.
- 1.4. The village of Weybread is in a largely rural part of the district and lies approximately 32 kilometres to the south of Norwich north of the village. Other settlements in close proximity are that of Harleston which lies circa 4 km to the north of the site and the settlement of Fressingfield which lies circa 2.8 km south of the site
- 1.5. Weybread is comprised predominantly of residential properties. The settlement is formed of two sections, that immediately north-west of the Crown Chicken Site where development is focused along The Street and then another cluster of development around Church Road and King Street.
- 1.6. With the exception of the access into the site and the Public House, the application site lies within the Countryside and comprises a relatively level site with some hedgerow planting along the boundaries. The irregular northern site boundary is defined by the rear garden boundaries of the existing properties along the B1116 The Street, and part of the northern site boundary adjoins the B1116 where access is gained to the existing production facility and public house.
- 1.7. The south, east and western boundaries of the site are adjacent to existing agricultural fields. Along the north-western and south-eastern boundary of the site are two existing Public Rights of Way.
- 1.8. The site is not located within a Conservation Area, however there is a listed building in close proximity to the site, Greystone House, which is a grade II listed building located on The Street
- 1.9. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, which means the site is within a low risk flood zone.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1. The application seeks outline permission for the demolition of existing buildings and structures on the site and the erection of up to 110 residential dwellings and associated public open space, drainage infrastructure and vehicular access. All matters are reserved with the exception of access, the details of which are provided with this proposal.
- 2.2. Your officer calculates that the existing Factory and previously development land within the site amounts to approximately 1.67 hectares. The Masterplan provided with the application proposes to develop approximately 4.08 hectares of the site in a mix of low, medium and high density housing development. The new housing proposed on the site will, therefore, only comprise approximately 41% previously developed land. 59% of the area proposed for housing development on the site would, therefore, be on existing undeveloped/greenfield land.
- 2.3. The scheme also includes the redevelopment of the former Crown Public Inn (currently vacant). The applicant's intention is that this building is converted to provide a community space and a flexible A1 (retail)/ A3 (café)/ A4 (drinking establishment) and D1 (nursery/community space) land use is proposed. The applicant considers that this will allow a variety of uses, or combination of these uses, to operate from this building as the community requires.
- 2.4. In respect of the community building the applicant proposes that this development will, via a section 106 agreement, require the developer to undertake the conversion of the building up to a

satisfactory standard in order for it to be occupied for one of or a mix of the proposed uses. The applicant proposes that the final scheme will be undertaken in consultation with the parish council and the wider community, including details of future management arrangements.

- 2.5. The proposed redevelopment of this site has arisen as a result of the proposed relocation of the processing facility to a new site at Eye Airfield. A full planning application for this development has been submitted (application reference DC/17/05666) and was granted on 19th April 2018. It is understood that the business relocation to Eye Airfield is to enable the development of a modern factory building with the latest processing equipment, energy efficient services and control over odour emissions. It is understood that all existing employees will be transferred to the new business location at Eye Airfield and that the proposal would not result in loss of employment locally, however it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in a loss of employment opportunities in Weybread itself.
- 2.6. It is understood that public consultation exercises were carried out locally prior to the submission of this planning application.
- 2.7. The applicant states that the proposed scale of residential development on the site proposed (4.08 hectares, comprising 59% greenfield land) is required in order to make the proposal financially viable. A viability assessment has been presented to the Local Planning Authority and this has been forwarded to the district valuer for assessment.
- 2.8. For the reason that the applicant does not consider the development proposal to be financially viable no affordable housing has been proposed by the applicant as part of the development proposal.
- 2.9. A new vehicular access, in relatively the same location as the exiting factory access, is proposed as part of the application proposal is being proposed. The proposed access includes footways on the south western side of the highway to improve connectivity for pedestrians travelling along the B1116.
- 2.10. The scheme proposes to discharge surface water via the ditch that runs along the eastern boundary site, as per the existing surface water run-off from the processing site. It is understood that the ditch in question forms part of a drainage network which ultimately terminates at Weybread Pits County Wildlife Site, approximately 1.7 kilometres to the north of the proposal site.
- 2.11. The masterplan proposes locating a play area along the northern boundary of the site, along with additional landscape planting to screen the development from existing residential properties. The southern 'finger' of land associated with the site is proposed as public open space which the applicant considers can also act as an ecological area for the development.
- 2.12. This scheme indicates the applicant's intention to provide a mix of dwellings comprising 28 no. 2 bed dwellings, 54 no. 3 bed dwellings, 19 no. 4 bed dwellings, 9 no. 5 bed dwellings. This would create 12,163 sq ft of development floorspace. Details with regards the final layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are reserved to be considered should outline permission for any reason be granted.

3. The Principle Of Development

- 3.1. In considering the principle of this proposal, it is noted that the proposal brings about a number of issues which the decision taker will need to balance and weigh accordingly in reaching a decision. These issues are loosely summarised below, though this list is not exhaustive;

- The loss of an existing employment site.
- The delivery of housing in an area where there is an absence of a five year housing supply.
- The reuse of previously developed (“brownfield”) land.
- The location of the site outside any settlement boundary
- The scale of the development relative to existing facilities and services, and its impact on local communities.
- The provision of a range/mix of housing, including a percentage of affordable housing (as required by the NPPF and Development Plan).
- The comparable traffic generation resulting from the existing and proposed uses.

- 3.2. This list demonstrates that there are a number of factors to consider in reaching this decision and that many of these pull in differing directions. For example, the delivery of housing would result in some economic benefit through both the construction of the dwellings and subsequent spend from the occupants of the properties, but this needs to be weighed against the loss of an employment site which itself currently contributes to the local economy. In the same way, whilst the reuse of previously developed land is one of the core planning principles in the NPPF, such sites do not always lend themselves to reuse for residential development and can often be isolated from day-to-day facilities and services, as the uses upon them do not have the same needs/reliance on the services that a residential use would. It is not difficult to perceive, therefore, that there will be elements of this proposal which are likely to be in accordance with the development plan, and elements which may not be.
- 3.3. What follows is, therefore, an assessment of these issues and the considerations which require to be balanced in making a decision. That balance will be made within the Planning Balance carried out at the conclusion of this report.

4. Delivery of Housing (5 Year Housing Land Supply)

- 4.1. Paragraph 73 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) states that: “Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old”. Furthermore, paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF states that “where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless: i. the application of the policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”. NPPF footnote 7 states that “This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites “.
- 4.2. It is not considered that Mid Suffolk District Council can currently demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable Housing, and as such the relevant planning policies contained within the existing development plan are considered to be out of date, as per the consideration of the NPPF (2018).
- 4.3. Furthermore, the proposed development comprises approximately 41% previously developed land and the site lies at an existing village settlement and is not considered to be isolated as per the meaning in paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018). As such the

principle of the development should be assessed with regards to the requirements of the NPPF Paragraph 11.

- 4.4. Whilst the proposal would seek to deliver a mix of housing including some smaller units, it makes no provision for affordable housing (based on the applicant's consideration that this would make the scheme unviable) and, therefore, its contribution to housing supply would be tempered in terms of the positive contribution it would make. However, the delivery of housing is a core principle of the NPPF and must be weighed accordingly.

5. Sustainability of Location, Nearby Services and Connections Assessment Of Proposal

- 5.1. With regards to the relationship that the site has to facilities and services, the Supporting Statement submitted with the application identifies that;

"It is recognised that Weybread as a settlement does not have many services and facilities and as a result existing residents are reliant on car based journeys to access these. However, this application has arisen as a result of somewhat rare circumstances relating to the existing business and its proposed relocation. As such the issue of access to services and facilities must be considered in this context" and;

"Whilst it is recognised that the current residents of Weybread have limited access to services and facilities other than by private car, it is considered that this development still promotes sustainable development. The development provides the opportunity to create services and facilities within the settlement of Weybread which currently do not exist. These include a community building which could be used as a shop, pub or community meeting space, or indeed any combination of these uses as well as public open space with a children's playground. Currently such facilities are not available to the current residents of Weybread".

- 5.2. The recognition that the site is poorly located in terms of accessibility to facilities and services is clearly set out within the applicant's own submission and, whilst they seek to demonstrate that there are circumstances that are required to be taken into account in mitigation of this position, it is your officers' view that this is an inherently unsustainable location. Consideration will be given to the extent to which there are material circumstances that weigh in favour of the proposal later in this report, but it is recognised that, as a matter of principle, the proposal does not sit comfortably in assessing the sustainability of the proposal when assessed against the provisions of the NPPF, when taken as a whole and with policies CS1, CS2 and H7 of the development plan. The provision of a community facility and playground/open space, whilst likely to be welcome in the village, is considered to be unlikely to justify the provision of 110 dwellings in a location where the principle method of transport will be by private car. However, this will be balanced accordingly within the overall balance at the conclusion of this report and due weight given to those material considerations where relevant.

6. Loss of Employment Land

- 6.1. The site is currently in use as employment land. Policy E6 recognises the importance of existing industrial and commercial sites as providing local employment opportunities, and recognises that where their loss is proposed (through redevelopment) that there should be significant benefit to the surrounding environment, particularly in terms of improved residential amenity or traffic safety.

- 6.2. The applicant identifies that the proposal allows for a “significant betterment” to the local environment for the following reasons;
1. The factory has been located on the site for 50 years and has grown incrementally over this time. The incremental growth of the site has however resulted in a substantial business being located on this site, which in turn results in a high number of vehicle movements, including significant HGV journeys on the local highway network. This is potentially to the detriment of highway safety as HGV lorries are travelling along very narrow rural lanes not suited for this level of vehicle movements.
 2. The ad hoc growth of the factory also means that some of the buildings on site are old, and no longer fit for purpose. Specifically this means that issues with regards to odour and noise are not possible to fully mitigate against. Again these have detrimental impacts on the amenity of adjoining residential occupiers which were reported at the public exhibition and are regularly repeated to the Applicant. Part of the rationale behind relocation is to create a fit for purpose modern facility which will not only deal with these issues but allow for further expansion in the future.
 3. That notwithstanding the loss of the business from this site, the business and therefore all existing jobs from the current factory will, subject to the receipt of planning permission for the new processing facility at Eye Airfield, be relocated to a new site within the District. All existing jobs will therefore be retained within the local area and indeed further jobs will be created. If planning permission is not granted for a replacement processing facility then the redevelopment of this site will not take place.
- 6.3. In terms of point 1) above, the highways impacts of the proposal are considered in more detail later in this report. However, the LHA have raised concerns over the suitability of the site for the volume of development proposed, the inappropriateness of the travel plan submitted and the reliance on the private car that would result from the development. Where the applicant seeks to rely on a betterment of highway conditions through the removal of the business and its negative highway impacts, the proposal does not demonstrate that this would occur. As such, it is not considered that the proposal results in an improved highways position such that would bring a significant improvement to highway safety (as required by policy E6).
- 6.4. In terms of the point made at 2) above, this is considered to have merit and the removal of the business and buildings that exist on the site would weigh in favour of the proposal in terms of the potential (subject to suitable design and landscape impacts etc) improvement in the quality and appearance of the buildings and associated infrastructure on the site. This needs to be balanced in light of the scale of the development proposed and the need to expand the residential development into areas outside of the footprint of the employment space to bring about a quantum of development that the applicant identifies to be viable to deliver the development. However, as a matter of principle this would bring about some support for the proposal, particularly given the intention to secure the jobs currently employed in this business elsewhere in the district.
- 6.5. For these reasons, it is not considered that the proposal is in full conformity with policy E6. The proposal would bring about some benefits through the removal of the buildings on the site and the reduction in the potential for noise and odour resulting from the existing business activity. This is to be balanced against the absence of appropriate transport and highways mitigation, the scale of the development proposed, including its landscape impacts and inaccessible location, and the following considerations.
- 6.6. The applicant has supported the proposal with an Employment Land Review which considers the availability of other employment sites in the locality. Whilst the methodology and approach taken

have not been formally tested with any independent review of this document, the approach taken seems sensible, reasonable and considers proportionate alternatives to this site.

- 6.7. This review identifies that the provision of sites such as Eye Airfield and numerous industrial estates in Diss and Harleston provide opportunities in the local area for employment use and for businesses looking to locate in this area. The loss of this site does not therefore significantly restrict employment opportunities or employment land availability. The attractiveness of the application site compared to these alternatives is also poor for employment development. It also concludes that enquires are rarely received for substantial industrial warehousing units in rural location such as Weybread. They therefore consider there to be no regular or meaningful market in commercial property in such locations.
- 6.8. This assessment reflects the Western Suffolk Employment Land Review which identifies that the viability of Mid Suffolk North as an employment location is its proximity to the A140. It goes on to state that an effective employment location is well served by road infrastructure allowing employees ease of access to and from the site. As such. The applicants consider that the market demand for a property in a location such as Weybread to be limited.
- 6.9. In response to this, the Council's Economic Development Team have responded to recognise that the applicant has met with Mid Suffolk Economic Development Team from initial project proposal, these meetings, including pre-application discussions with Planning Officers, have been very helpful to understand requirements of both the applicant and the local community regarding eventual redevelopment of this rural employment site. Whilst they support the redevelopment of this site, they raise concerns over the following issues;
- Retention of employment on this rural site would be our preference.
 - From instigation of this re-development proposal the applicant has undertaken valuable community engagement. However, the responses from local residents to this application indicate continuing concerns regarding volume of residential development proposed for the site.
 - A revised site development plan with fewer residential units, additional community facilities and enhanced on-site employment provision would ensure a more sustainable development.
 - Would support additional discussions with applicant (or their agents)
 - Request that applicants review the employment land review, as the focus of this review appears to be premises of 50,000 sq ft plus. Initial enquiries undertaken by Economic Development Team, and communicated to the applicant, indicated most demand in this area would be for smaller serviced office space and serviced B1/B2 type premises up to 10,000 sq ft.
 - There are many sole traders located within rural areas, that are difficult to contact, these small businesses frequently require move on space close to their existing base. The Economic Development Team would be happy to work with the applicant engaging with various business mentoring services and other organisations to obtain more detailed information regarding this sector and their current business aspirations.
 - Revision of the proposed site layout to provide a focal point for the development - possibly a centrally located 'village green' and good quality adjacent premises with potential for a community run business – shop, and/or café, exhibition space etc. complimenting existing uses within community centre.
- 6.10. It is apparent, therefore, that whilst the scope for the uptake of the entirety of the site for commercial purposes has been considered through the employment land review undertaken, the potential to incorporate some employment use within the development and to improve further the community offer brought forward have not been adequately addressed. This is considered to leave the decision taker with a clear need to be able to demonstrate that the proposal brings

about the significant improvements (as previously considered) required by policy E6 if the loss of the employment land is to be permitted in the absence of a more robust evaluation of the potential for a mixed use scheme to be employed on this site.

- 6.11. Whilst the NPPF does provide that Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose and that where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities, for reasons already given, whilst the proposal is considered to bring about some benefits, this matter will need to be balanced in the context of all the relevant material considerations given that the proposal is not considered to be fully compliant with policy E6.

7. Reuse of Previously Developed (Brownfield) Land

- 7.1. One of the core planning principles set out in the NPPF is to encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. The NPPF provides that local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.
- 7.2. Whilst the applicant draws attention that part of the site is previously developed land, there would be a significant area of the site which is not previously developed (Your officers calculate that approximately 59% of the land proposed for new housing development would not be on previously developed land and would be on greenfield land). It is not considered that the proposal would, therefore, comply with this aim. Therefore, consideration must be given to the extent that development of the countryside to facilitate the redevelopment of the brownfield elements of the site would be necessary and appropriate.
- 7.3. To this end, whilst the proposed development would deliver approximately 41% of the new housing proposed on previously developed land, and this can be given due weight in the decision making process, when account is given to the overall character of the wider site the development proposal would overspill considerably into the village's existing green hinterland and would result in a significant impact on its existing character and setting.

8. Scale of Development

- 8.1. The Parish Council raise concerns as to the increase in the number of properties in the whole of the parish (60%) and increase in the number of properties on The Street (175%). Whilst these figures have not been formally assessed, it is apparent that the scale of the development would be significantly larger than the general scale of most of the development in the village, which is predominantly linear in form fronting onto roads.
- 8.2. The proposed depth and form of development is, therefore, out of character with the existing pattern of development and would result in a significant intrusion into the countryside and a development that is inherently at odds with the scale of the village generally. The development would wrap around the existing frontage development, bringing about a variance in the built form of the village and a consolidation of housing into a contained area that is at odds with the sparse nature of development in this part of Weybread.
- 8.3. There are very few examples of estate style development in this locality, the nearest being in Harleston (to the north) and, to a lesser extent, Fressingfield and Stradbroke (to the south).

However, scale is not solely about the size of the development, but about the impacts of the development also. This report will consider the infrastructure requirements, including education provision, in more detail subsequently, but it should be recognised that the scale of this proposal would give rise to significant pressures upon local infrastructure (including highways, education, drainage etc) that have not been adequately addressed.

- 8.4. For all of the above reasons, the scale of the development is considered to be out of character with its surroundings and would give rise to harm to local infrastructure which cannot be/has not been shown to be, mitigated. As such, as a matter of planning judgement, the scale of the development is considered to have a negative effect in the planning balance.

9. Traffic Generation/Highways Issues

- 9.1. It is recognised that the current use of the site would give rise to traffic usage that is not sustainable in terms of the number and size of vehicles visiting the site and that there would be a change in the nature of vehicles visiting the site if redevelopment is permitted.
- 9.2. Comments from local residents draw significant attention to the local highway network (as referred to earlier in this report) and its capacity for further traffic, the absence of local facilities and services and the impacts this would have on both existing and future residents.
- 9.3. Submitted with the application is a Transport Statement prepared by Connect Consulting prepared on behalf of the applicant. This statement provides the following summary;
- A new section of footway alongside the B1116 will be provided as part of the development resulting in the village being within walking distance. There is a bus stop within 100m of the site and a cycle route some 650m distant.
 - The development will be subject to a Travel Plan to promote non-car travel to its fullest extent.
 - The proposed development gives rise to only a small increase in traffic on the highway relative to that which otherwise exists; just 56 movements over 12 hours.
 - The proposed site access junction has 59m long sightlines these being suitable for the surveyed speed of traffic. The site access junction has been shown to operate within capacity and the traffic effect of the development is acceptable.
- 9.4. The proposal is also supported by a Travel Plan.
- 9.5. Paragraph 108 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018) states, inter alia, that in assessing specific applications for development it should be ensured that: safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. Furthermore, paragraph 109 of the NPPF (2018) provides that development should only be prevented or refused on highway safety grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 9.6. In response to the submitted documentation, the LHA have raised a number of concerns, including;
- There is a limited bus service in Weybread; insufficient for a mode of transport for commuting for work, travelling to further education or medical appointments, therefore, there will be a great reliance on the private car;
 - The catchment primary school is approximately 2 miles and the secondary school is approx.12
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miles from the site. As there is no safe walking route to school, there will be a need to provide transport for school pupils;

- SCC Community Transport Team were unable to identify any suitable measures that would benefit the Mid-Suffolk Connecting Communities service in the wider area.

- 9.7. Although the local highway authority consider that this development should not be prevented or refused on highways grounds as the residual cumulative impacts of the proposed development on the existing highway network would not be severe (as per the provisions of NPPF paragraph 109), due to the scale of development proposed and the number of new dwellings proposed, the LHA does not consider the proposal site to be a sustainable location from a transport policy perspective.
- 9.8. In consideration of the lack of accessible transport alternatives to the private car, the proposal is also contrary to NPPF paragraphs 108 and 109. However, where the LHA does not find there to be capacity issues with the level of transport generated by the proposal, it highlights landscape character impacts. Whilst this is noted, it is considered that this is better considered in terms of the lack of alternative transport options and the lack of a sufficiently robust Travel Plan, where the number of vehicle movements have not been minimised. Again, these points fall contrary to the provisions of NPPF in this regard.
- 9.9. Even when considering that the NPPF recognises the difference between rural and urban areas in terms of the potential to seek to maximise alternative transport opportunities, the absence of robust measures to mitigate car usage (through the Travel Plan) demonstrates that the highway issues resulting from this development weigh against the proposal.

10. Design and Layout

- 10.1. The application is made in outline form where the matters of scale, layout, appearance and landscaping are reserved for consideration at a later date, should outline planning permission be approved.
- 10.2. Accompanying the application is a Framework Masterplan and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which provide context to how the site could be developed.
- 10.3. The masterplan framework shows the indicative location of the areas for residential development, site access, proposed areas for green open spaces, proposed play area as Locally Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP), proposed and existing pedestrian routes and footpaths, existing and proposed boundary planting and an attenuation pond. However, the existing public footpath to the east is not connected with the proposed development site; and the plan does not show any landscaping within the residential development as part of the green infrastructure, and these points would need to be addressed as part of any detailed submission made.
- 10.4. The site benefits from existing tree planting, hedgerows and scrub areas around the boundaries of the site which would assist in providing a reasonable screening of the proposed development. The site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape quality or value and, whilst the site is not within a Special Landscape Area (SLA), it does sit just 300m outside. Therefore, The Council's Landscape Consultant suggests it would be advisable that the same ethos is used; with high standards of landscaping and materials that compliments the existing character of the village and landscape.
- 10.5. The proposals have embraced a good approach by retaining the majority of the existing vegetation and by supplementing and reinforcing the existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees by proposed structural planting across the site. The proposed planting ties in into the adjacent

existing network of trees and hedgerows and contributes to mitigating the visual impact of the development while providing an attractive setting for the residential development.

- 10.6 There are also opportunities for habitat creation around the boundaries of the site and on the green open space to the south and this would enable some environmental enhancement to accrue.
- 10.7 Overall, therefore, whilst many of the specific elements of the proposal are, in principle, achievable, concerns remain over the general scale of the development, the impact this would have on the existing character of the village, and the potential to integrate safe access and parking within the layout. The overall balance will need to take into account these shortfalls whilst recognising the benefits that could accrue through landscape and biodiversity enhancement.

11. Residential Amenity

- 11.1 The layout of the development would be brought forward as a reserved matter in the event that outline planning permission is granted in this case. The impacts of the proposed dwellings on existing residential properties would be a matter of detail for consideration at that stage.
- 11.2 The framework masterplan shows that the development would be 'in depth' to the rear of only a small number of properties where it should be possible to mitigate any amenity impacts to an acceptable level. Furthermore, when coupled with the detailed landscape proposals that will also be the subject of a reserved matters application, it would appear that this development can be accommodated without giving rise to detrimental impacts on the amenities of existing properties.

12. Drainage

- 12.1 The applicant has in principle addressed the requirements of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), who have recommended approval subject to certain conditions, and the Environment Agency who are satisfied with the proposed foul drainage strategy, again subject to conditions.
- 12.2 Concern has, however been raised locally with regards the proposed route of surface water flows from the development site and the impact this would have on the Weybread Pits County Wildlife site, located approximately 1.7 kilometres to the north of the site. Concerns have also been raised with regards the increased likelihood of flooding of land and property along this route. Suffolk Wildlife Trust have also raised concern with regards the disposal of potentially contaminated water at Weybread Pits CWS and the potential impact on ecological species that could potentially result.
- 12.3 The above concerns essentially challenge the evidence put forward by the applicant in this regard and it will be up to the applicant to demonstrate that the proposed methods of foul and surface water disposal would not result in increased likelihood of flooding and would not result in harm to the existing water environment and to protected and priority species and their habitats.

13. Renewable Energy/Sustainable Construction

- 13.1 The Core Strategy expects new development to be of a high standard of design and layout and that it will address the need for energy and resource conservation. Policy CS3 provides principles around low water use, passive design, solar gain and low impact materials which are also relevant to this proposal.

- 13.2 The NPPF provides that Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.
- 13.3 The proposal is in outline form and does not address the renewable energy/sustainable construction elements to a satisfactory standard. However, as identified by the Council's Sustainability Officer, these matters are directly affected in the design and layout of the proposal and can, therefore, be addressed by a condition which will require these matters to be addressed as part of any reserved matters submissions.

14. Land Contamination

- 14.1 The application has been scrutinised by the Council's Environmental Protection Team. A condition is recommended to adequately address this matter and there are, therefore, no reasons to raise concerns over land contamination in respect of this proposal.

15. Impact on Heritage Assets

- 15.1 The main heritage concerns relate to the impact of this development on the setting of the adjacent grade II listed Graystone House. The advice received from the Council's heritage Team recognise that the Crown Farm structures, as well as the fencing around the back of the property, have effectively cut off the connection of the listed building to the farmland further to the south. The setting of Graystone House could today be defined as; neighbouring properties to the west and north, a row of tall trees which allow for some views to factory and garage structures on Crown Farm to the east, and a timber panelled fence on top of a slope to the south. The western, northern and southern boundaries of Graystone House would not be impacted by the proposed development. The eastern boundary of Graystone House is currently negatively affected by existing garage structures built very close to the property line.
- 15.2 The Heritage Team considers that demolishing the existing factory buildings and developing the site for residential use could have a positive effect on the setting of the listed building, as the current structures on the Crown Farm site are built too close to, and imposing on, the setting of Graystone House. This would be subject to the use of appropriate scale and design for the proposed dwellings, as any new development should reflect the typology of the existing buildings in the area.
- 15.3 The Archaeological Service highlight that this site lies in an area of archaeological potential recorded on the County Historic Environment Record, fronting on to the line of a Roman Road (CRT 019). Remains relating to Medieval occupation, including evidence for at least two kilns (WYB 006, 015 and 055), are recorded in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site, along with extensive scatters of medieval finds (WYB 004, 005, 008, 020, 051). As a result, there is high potential for the discovery of below-ground heritage assets of archaeological importance within this area, and groundworks associated with the development have the potential to damage or destroy any archaeological remains which exist.
- 15.4 They are satisfied that any impacts of this development can be satisfactorily mitigated through conditions requiring a scheme of archaeological works.
- 15.5 As such, there do not appear to be any heritage matters weighing against the proposal.

16. Biodiversity and Protected Species

- 16.1 In assessing this application due regard has been given to the provisions of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, in so far as it is applicable to the proposal and the provisions of Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010 in relation to protected species.
 - 16.2 An Ecological Appraisal and Bat Report has been submitted for the proposed application (FPCR, December 2017). This ecological report includes sufficient information to assess the impacts of development on designated sites, protected species and priority species/habitats.
 - 16.3 The Council's Consultant Ecologists have recommended conditions relating to the submission of bat licenses, ecological mitigation, landscape and habitat management and the submission of a lighting scheme.
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17. Planning Obligations, Infrastructure and CIL

- 17.1 The application raises significant concerns regarding the potential to deliver appropriate infrastructure to support the proposal. The locality of this site has been subjected to a number of planning applications for new housing development, not least in Fressingfield. The potential to support development of this size is, therefore, limited and dependent on whether other development is delivered.
- 17.2 In response to the consultation on this proposal, SCC have concluded that they currently forecast to have no surplus places at the Sixth Form High School, however this can be addressed via a future bid for CIL funding. The application site is remote from services and we will have no primary school places available within statutory safe walking distance. It would not be sustainable to bus children as young as five around the district. Developer funding for school transport would not be in perpetuity and would not overcome the other disbenefits of transporting pupils. It is considered that it will be possible to expand the catchment primary school, and although it is not possible to designate places, more sustainable development would be from development abutting Fressingfield's settlement boundary where children could walk to school. If this proposed development is granted planning permission this situation is going to be wholly unsatisfactory from education point of view and in County Council's view this scale of growth in such a remote location is not sustainable. It is recognised that the District Council faces an issue about identifying adequate housing land. The County Council considers that it is a matter for the District Council to balance the needs for the release of new housing sites with the risks associated with the emergence of a possibly unsustainable pattern of school provision. In this context it leaves it to the District Council to draw the planning balance considering these and all other relevant matters.
- 17.3 It is considered that this conclusion succinctly covers the balance that needs to be made in respect of the delivery of this scheme (including delivery of housing and the reuse of an existing brownfield site) against the unsustainable location and the poor infrastructure which exists to support the development. Furthermore, the proposal delivers no affordable housing, seeking to demonstrate that the costs of remediating and developing the site would be such that make such provision financially unviable. The applicant's position regarding viability has been considered by the District Valuer who does not agree with this position and considers the proposal viable enough to provide a proportion of affordable housing.
- 17.4 Notwithstanding the above principles which will be balanced in the conclusion of this report, elements of the required infrastructure such as libraries, waste and broadband delivery can be

achieved through CIL or planning conditions. These matters can, therefore, be successfully addressed through this proposal.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

18. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 18.1 This application brings about a number of issues which require careful attention in reaching a decision upon this proposal. What follows, therefore, is a balancing of those issues in light of the assessment carried out within the preceding paragraphs of this report.
- 18.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The consideration is, therefore, whether the development accords with the development plan and, if not, whether there are material considerations that would indicate a decision should be taken contrary to the development plan. The development plan includes the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008), Core Strategy Focussed Review (2012) and saved policies in the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998).
- 18.3 In light of this application relating to a proposal for new housing, a further important consideration in determining this application is that Mid Suffolk does not currently have a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The NPPF requires LPAs to identify a 5 year supply of specific deliverable housing sites and states that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 18.4 In considering the three dimensions of sustainable development, the proposal would go some way to meeting the social dimension through the delivery of housing incorporating a mix that includes smaller market dwellings and some community use within the former public house. However, these benefits are tempered by the absence of any affordable housing provision (thereby failing to deliver a scheme that provides appropriate housing for all areas of society) and the siting of the development in a location that would not lend itself to future occupants having the ability to walk or cycle to facilities and services. The potential benefits (including delivery of open space and community provision on site) would not overcome the significant and demonstrable social harm resulting from the isolation of residents from education provision and other significant day-to-day facilities and services. As such, the proposal is not considered to be socially sustainable.
- 18.5 In terms of the environmental dimension, the proposal would result in the redevelopment of an existing brownfield site where the poor quality existing buildings would be removed. This would bring about some environmental benefit which, when coupled with the removal of the HGV traffic serving this rural site and the potential to deliver a high quality design, would give rise to environmental benefits that should be considered positively.
- 18.6 Set against this, and weighing against the development, is the loss of a significant area of agricultural land, the lack of access to most key facilities and services that would be required to make day-to-day living viable without reliance on journeys being made by car, the absence of suitable travel plan measures and mitigation, the scale of the development in this rural location, the failure to demonstrate safe and suitable access and the failure to provide suitable surface and foul water drainage evidence. Whilst the benefits of the scheme are not inconsequential, the

resultant harm would, in environmental terms, significantly and demonstrably outweigh those benefits.

- 18.7 In economic terms, the scheme would result in the creation of construction jobs and likely ongoing multiplier effects on spending in the local economy, The delivery of a flexible use within the public house would also bring some economic benefits. These benefits do, however, need to be balanced against the loss of an existing employment site and in light of the absence of substantive evidence within the application that the development could not incorporate a better mix of commercial development that would suit the local needs identified by the Council's Economic Development Officer. It is also recognised that the proposal would not see the loss of the existing jobs in the district, as the proposal sits alongside the potential relocation of the business to a premises in the MSDC area. It is, therefore, solely the loss of the employment use of the site which is to be foregone if permission is granted here.
- 18.8 Whilst the benefits of reusing this site are understood, the absence of robust justification that the site cannot be reused for more intensive (than proposed) commercial or community uses, offset with some residential development, gives rise to conflict with policy E6 and with the aims of the NPPF to ensure developments provide, or can access, suitable facilities and services for occupants. Therefore, whilst it is recognised that the applicant has gone some way to evidencing the lack of viable alternative uses for the site, it is not considered this has been explored sufficiently robustly to demonstrate beyond doubt that a residential development of this scale (particularly given that it is out of scale with the character of the village as a whole) is the only viable option for this site.
- 18.9 Taking all of these considerations in the round, the development would deliver some economic, social and environmental benefits consistent with the NPPF and the development plan. However, weighing against the proposal would be the environmental harm arising from future dependency on car borne trips, the unsafe access provision, the use of a significant element of greenfield land to accommodate the required levels of development, the scale of development proposed and the failure to adequately address drainage on the site. Alongside this, the social harm resulting from the absence of any affordable housing provision (in an area where there is a recognised need) and the social isolation from educational provision and having to travel for day-to-day essentials, and the economic harm associated with the loss of this employment site without sufficient justification to comply with policy E6, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits that have been identified. Accordingly, the scheme would not constitute sustainable development and there are not material considerations sufficient to outweigh the conflict with the development plan.
- 18.10 A recommendation of refusal is therefore made.

RECOMMENDATION

That Outline Planning Permission should be refused for the following reasons:

The application proposes the redevelopment of the existing commercial buildings on the site and an area of agricultural land for the provision of 110 dwellings, the conversion of the existing public house to a flexible use of A1 (retail), A3 (Café), A4 (Public House) and D1 (Community Space/Day Nursery), public open space, drainage infrastructure and vehicular access. Whilst it is recognised that the Council does not have a deliverable five year supply of housing land and that the proposal would bring about some environmental benefits through the removal of the existing buildings from the landscape, the reuse of previously developed land (in part) and the reduction of HGVs that currently access the site, and also some economic benefit through the community/commercial uses proposed in the public house, the proposal is not considered to constitute a sustainable development due to the adverse impacts which would result from the proposal which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh those benefits, as follows;

The development of 110 dwellings in this location would be out of character with the existing pattern of development, contrary to development plan policies CS5, GP1, H13 and H15 and would give rise to a significant increase in the overall size of the village without appropriate infrastructure being in place to accommodate the future occupants of the development.

The absence of existing facilities and services within reasonable distance/travelling time of the development by public transport, walking or cycling would give rise to a reliance on the private car, contrary to the provisions of the NPPF which seek to ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. Furthermore, there are no primary school places available within the local catchment area and it would not be sustainable to bus children as young as five around the district to alternative schools, contrary to the provisions of the NPPF which seeks to encourage the minimisation of journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure and education. In the absence of a robust Travel Plan that is tailored to the rural location of this site, the opportunities to minimise travel by private car have not been demonstrated, further accentuating the environmental harm which would occur from the proposal.

The proposal does not include any provision for affordable housing, contrary to the requirements of saved policy H4 and the provisions of the NPPF which seeks to ensure delivery of housing of the size, type, tenure and range that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand. The proposal would, therefore, fail to meet the social dimension of sustainable development, providing a development that would be remote from day-to-day services and which fails to deliver housing that meets the local needs of the community and the wider area. Viability information provided by the applicant has been assessed by the District Valuer who consider the development would be viable enough to provide a proportion of affordable housing.

Saved policy E6 of the MSDC Local Plan 1998 recognises the importance of existing industrial and commercial sites as providing local employment opportunities. Whilst the application seeks to demonstrate that the site is no longer required for such purposes, the employment land review fails to take account of the demand for smaller serviced office space and serviced B1/B2 type uses that may wish to locate in this area. As such, the proposal fails to adequately demonstrate that the site is no longer required for such purposes and, in accordance with the requirements of policy E6, fails to demonstrate a significant benefit for the local community. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to policy E6 and the provisions of the NPPF which seek to promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas.

For all of these reasons, the proposal is considered to be inherently unsustainable and, notwithstanding the triggering of the 'tilted balance', the adverse impacts of the proposal significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits such that permission should be refused.