Committee Report

Item 7C

Ward: Stonham.
Ward Member/s: Cllr Suzie Morley.

REFERENCE – GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION SUBJECT TO ALTERATIONS TO LAYOUT AS REQUESTED BY THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY, COMPLETION OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENT AND CONDITIONS

Description of Development
Outline Planning Application (some matters reserved) - Erection of 34 No. dwellings and associated garaging and parking (affordable housing elements to be agreed as per LPA policy). Creation of vehicular access to highway and pedestrian pavement link to village and adjacent Stonham Barns (via Stonham Barns Section 106 agreed route).

Location
Land to The East of Heatherleigh, East End Road, Stonham Aspal, Suffolk

Parish: Stonham Aspal
Expiry Date: 21/06/2019
Application Type: OUT - Outline Planning Application
Development Type: Major Small Scale - Dwellings
Applicant: Mr Andrew Turnbull
Agent: Mr Craig Beech

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 provided under reference DC/18/00004. Advice given at the time centred on the lack of a five-year housing land supply in the district and stressed that any application would need to
demonstrate it could positively address the sustainable development objectives set out within the National Planning Policy Framework as well as satisfying a number of material planning considerations and the requirements of statutory consultees. It concluded that provided these issues could be addressed, support for a planning application could be given.

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
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
CS09 - Density and Mix
GP01 - Design and layout of development
HB01 - Protection of historic buildings
HB14 - Ensuring archaeological remains are not destroyed
H04 - Proportion of Affordable Housing
H07 - Restricting housing development unrelated to needs of 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
T09 - Parking Standards
T10 - Highway Considerations in Development
CL08 - Protecting wildlife habitats

Neighbourhood Plan Status

This application site is not within a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

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

Stonham Aspal Parish Clerk
The members of Stonham Aspal Parish Council unanimously agreed to object to the planning application for 36 dwellings to the east of Heatherleigh, East End Road at their meeting on Tuesday 19th March 2019 on the grounds of:
Strength of public opinion against the development, the scale of the development and impact on the village as a whole, the ability of the social infrastructure and utilities to cope with the additional households, safety of access to the site, impact on the setting of listed buildings, impact on the character of East End Road and the suitability of the site classified as open countryside for development.

A number of East End Road residents attended the meeting and voiced strong opposition to the proposed development. This opposition was mirrored from residents in the wider Village.

Stonham Aspal currently consists of approximately 240 homes. A development of 36 houses would constitute a 15% increase in the number of households in the village. On top of this proposal, a further 15-20 houses have already been approved by MSDC planning. Overall the village would be looking at a 21-23% increase in households. This is completely untenable and would impact negatively on the whole personality of the village which is classified as a Secondary Village under the MSDC Local Plan.

East End Road itself is an idyllic, secluded road. There is no through traffic and the residents who chose to live there did so for its quiet rural location. For the newer residents’ searches before purchasing their properties will have rightly shown the proposed development site categorised as open countryside with no suggestion of future development. Building on this site would unfairly erode these residents’ rightful expectations of a rural lifestyle.

At least four of the properties that would be directly affected are listed buildings and such a development does not take into consideration the impact of the change in environment on their historic status, ...

**Anglian Water**

There are assets owned by Anglian Water or those subject to an adoption agreement within or close to the development boundary that may affect the layout of the site. Anglian Water would ask that the following text be included within your Notice should permission be granted. Anglian Water has assets close to or crossing this site or there are assets subject to an adoption agreement. Therefore, the site layout should take this into account and accommodate those assets within either prospectively adoptable highways or public open space.

The foul drainage from this development is in the catchment of Stonham Aspal Water Recycling Centre that will have available capacity for these flows

Used Water Network Development will lead to an unacceptable risk of flooding downstream. Anglian Water will need to plan effectively for the proposed development, if permission is granted. We will need to work with the applicant to ensure any infrastructure improvements are delivered in line with the development. Our site topography assessment has identified that a pumped connection may be required, as such we would require confirmation of the proposed pumped discharge rate (if applicable). We therefore request a condition requiring an on-site drainage strategy.

The preferred method of surface water disposal would be to a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) with connection to sewer seen as the last option. Building Regulations (part H) on Drainage and Waste Disposal for England includes a surface water drainage hierarchy, with infiltration on site as the preferred disposal option, followed by discharge to watercourse and then connection to a sewer.

From the details submitted to support the planning application the proposed method of surface water management does not relate to Anglian Water operated assets. As such, we are unable to provide comments on the suitability of the surface water management. The Local Planning Authority should seek the advice of the Lead Local Flood Authority or the Internal Drainage Board.
Anglian Water would therefore recommend the following planning condition if the Local Planning Authority is mindful to grant planning approval:

Condition - Prior to the construction above damp-proof course, a scheme for on-site foul water drainage works, including connection point and discharge rate, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to the occupation of any phase, the foul water drainage works relating to that phase must have been carried out in complete accordance with the approved scheme.

**Suffolk Wildlife Trust**
No response.

**Natural England**
No response.

**EDF Energy - New Supply**
No response.

**Suffolk Police - Design Out Crime Officers**
No response.

**SCC Development Contributions Manager, Education:**
The local schools are Stonham Aspal CEVA Primary School, Debenham High School, and Hartismere School.

Based on existing forecasts SCC will have surplus places available at the local primary and secondary (ages 11 - 16) schools, but no surplus places available for sixth form. For sixth form provision a future minimum CIL funding bid of at least £39,814 (2018/19 costs) will be made to Mid Suffolk District Council.

If the District Council considers that planning permission should be granted for the outline application for up to 36 dwellings, this must be on the basis that s106 developer funding is secured by way of a planning obligation for the costs of secondary school transport. Contribution required is as follows:

a) School transport contribution - 7 secondary-age pupils are forecast to arise from the proposed development. Developer contributions are sought to fund school transport provision for a minimum of five years for secondary-age pupils. Annual school transport cost per pupil is £960. Therefore, contribution is £960 x 7 pupils x 5 years = £33,600, increased by the RPI.

Pre-school:  
This proposed development is in the Stonhams ward, where there is an existing deficit of places. Therefore, a future CIL funding bid of at least £33,332 (2018/19 costs) will be made.

Libraries:  
A CIL contribution of £216 per dwelling is sought i.e. £7,776.

**SCC - Travel Plan Co-ordinator**
I can confirm that I have no comment to make on this application with regards to the need for a travel plan.

**SCC - Highways**
Notice is hereby given that the County Council as Highway Authority recommends that any permission which that Planning Authority may give should include the conditions shown below to:
- Control the provision of the visibility splays to the access and ensure they are provided at all times;
- Provide detail on the access, including layout, levels, gradient, surfacing and means of surface water drainage to be agreed;
- Provide similar details for estate roads and footpaths;
- To ensure delivery of parking, road connection and footpaths to each dwelling prior to occupation;
- To provide detail on parking, electric vehicle charging, and cycle storage to be agreed;
- Provision of a Construction Method Statement to include HGV routing to and from site;
- Give details of the means through which surface water will be prevented from entering the highway; and
- Provide details on refuse and recycling storage within the site.

The s106 contribution for a footway for The Stonham Barns Application 3150/15 is from the North/West the Stonham Barns to the footways within Stonham village. The applicant is requested to confirm the footway within the Crowfield Road Application (4847/16) can be used by the public. This will inform Suffolk Highways on the design for the scheme.

**SCC - Fire & Rescue**
Access to buildings for fire appliances and firefighters must meet with the requirements specified in Building Regulations Approved Document B, (Fire Safety), 2006 Edition, incorporating 2010 and 2013 amendments Volume 1 - Part B5, Section 11 dwelling houses; and, similarly, Volume 2, Part B5, Sections 16 and 17 in the case of buildings other than dwelling houses. These requirements may be satisfied with other equivalent standards relating to access for firefighting, in which case those standards should be quoted in correspondence.


Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service recommends that fire hydrants be installed within this development on a suitable route for laying hose, i.e. avoiding obstructions. However, it is not possible, at this time, to determine the number of fire hydrants required for firefighting purposes. The requirement will be determined at the water planning stage when site plans have been submitted by the water companies.

**SCC - Archaeological Service**
This site lies in an area of archaeological potential recorded on the County Historic Environment Record, on the edge of the original extent of the medieval Stonham Aspal Green (SAL 029). This was a focus for medieval and post-medieval occupation, as reflected by the surviving historic buildings which still surround it. Scatters of Roman and Saxon finds have also been recorded to the north-east of the proposed development area (SAL 011). As a result, there is high potential for the discovery of below-ground heritage assets of archaeological importance within this site, and groundworks associated with the development have the potential to damage or destroy any archaeological remains which exist.

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 199), 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.

**Communities (Major Development)**
No response.

**Public Realm**
No response.

**Heritage Team**
The Heritage Team considers that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset because it would erode the rural setting of the nearby listed building.

The Heritage Team considers that harm would be mitigated by the layout proposed and should be rated no greater than low.

The Heritage Team recommends that this harm be weighed against public benefits of the scheme in accordance with statutory duties and relevant policy.

The proposal would potentially affect the setting of three listed buildings: The Old School House to the west of the site, Longlands Hall to the north of the site, and School Farmhouse to the south east of the site.

As the proposal is in outline form with access and layout to be considered, but other matters reserved, it is not possible at this stage to fully assess the impact of the proposal. Although scale is a reserved matter, it is clear from the layout drawings how many bedrooms are proposed for each plot.

The Old School House is somewhat detached from the site with other properties to its east and north east. The proposal would not fundamentally change the character of its surroundings although it would lose some sense of being at the fringe of the settlement.

School House Farmhouse stands on the south side of the A1120 a little to the east of the south. It is surrounded by development associated with Stonham Barns which has all but eliminated visual and other connection with farmland that was presumably associated with it. Land opposite the Farmhouse - not part of the present site - remains undeveloped and contributes some sense of open space to its setting. The site is a small part of its setting and impact would be very low.

Longlands is a large house set back from East End Road in a large plot. Its garden is partly well treed, but is partly open towards the eastern part of the site. There are houses to its west and across East End Road to the east, but the site contributes to a sense of space and rural detachment in the setting of Longlands. The layout submitted proposes to retain an unbuilt buffer area along the northern boundary which would greatly reduce the impact of built development and would limit potential harm.

**MSDC - Planning Policy**
Stonham Aspal is a much less sustainable area especially with regard to sustainable infrastructure and connectivity, including lack of services and facilities.

The proposal in question appears very speculative and out of keeping and proportion with the existing settlement. Stonham Aspal in general contains a liner pattern and form of development to its defined existing settlement, with 'The Street and A1120' sweeping through it, with large areas of openness and trees.

This proposal would essentially create a large bulk and mass of new housing to the eastern side away from the settlement cluster. This would create a disconnected approach that is not inclusive or regards or respects the existing pattern and form of existing development. But, would create a very insular proposal that is disproportionate to the areas character, context and significantly lacks social cohesion and quality integration.

Equally, the intensification and cumulative impacts the major proposal would place on infrastructure (such as schools, health and highways) would be unsustainable in this location that is not envisaged to
significantly grow due to the issues of delivery, provision and connectivity. The proposal would undermine the emerging plan-led approach and known geography and context of the area.

This response has mainly looked at the issues of the principle of development and has not comprehensively assessed all details. However, by way of observation the site is rural and contains rural surrounding context. There are some listed buildings surrounding the site, which needs to be regarded and reflected as the site is within the immediate historic setting. Equally, there are protected species surrounding the area and the site is likely part of the ecological networks. This site may be within a 20km zone of a Natura 2000 site. Therefore, an HRA will be required. Protected Species have been recorded near to the site.

The proposal does not constitute sustainable development. The application is strongly recommended for refusal on matters of principle and detail.

**Strategic Housing**

No response.

**B: Representations**

A number of public representations were received in response to the application. A total of five comments of support were received, while objections were received from eleven separate addresses.

Comments of support noted the proximity of the nearby facilities at Stonham Barns and the proximity of good primary and secondary schools and the support to these facilities that additional residents would bring. Attention was also drawn to the need for affordable housing in the area and the fact that this development would help to address connectivity within Stonham Aspal itself through the provision of additional footpaths within the area. Support was also given towards the extension of the 30mph speed limit through Stonham Aspal.

Objections drew attention to the following material planning considerations:

- The site falls outside of the established settlement boundary and is classified within the adopted Development Plan as countryside;
- The Local Planning Authority can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply;
- Submission is out of scale with the village;
- Design is out of keeping with the character of the area;
- Low water pressure existing in East End Road and no immediate access to sewerage is provided close to the site;
- Footway access to the rest of Stonham Aspal is not provided;
- The development would put additional pressure of local facilities in terms of school places and capacity at medical facilities;
- Street lighting within the scheme would disrupt the rural character of the village;
- Increase in noise levels from the residential occupation of what is currently an open field;
- Loss of wildlife habitat;
- Increase in traffic volumes on the roads through Stonham Aspal;
- Access to the site is taken from a road with an unrestricted speed limit and would result in a highways danger; and
- Impacts on the setting of nearby listed buildings

**PLANNING HISTORY**

No relevant planning history.
PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1. The Site and Surroundings

1.1. The 2ha site is roughly rectangular in shape and is located on the northern side of the A1120 and to the south of East End Road, on the eastern fringe of Stonham Aspal. The site is approximately 220m east of the edge of the village settlement boundary, which terminates at the junction of the A1120 and Crowfield Road.

1.2. The land comprises an open field in agricultural (arable) use. Residential development lies to the west and north. Stonham Barns, a tourist facility, is located opposite the site on the southern side of the A1120. Open countryside (arable fields) lies to the east. The site’s western boundary is well vegetated. A hedgerow aligns the East End Road frontage. Sporadic vegetation planting has established along the A1120 boundary. The east is open to the countryside beyond.

1.3. The site is not in or near an area designated for special landscape significance, e.g. Special Area of Conservation, Special Landscape Area, or AONB. Likewise, the site is not in or near a Conservation Area. Three Grade II listed buildings are in proximity of the site, Longlands Hall, Old School House and Brambly Hedge. The site is in Flood Zone 1.

2. The Proposal

2.1. The application seeks outline planning permission, with all matters reserved except access and layout, for 34 dwellings (reduced from 36 during the course of the application). 35% of the proposed dwellings are offered as affordable housing.

2.2. The site is laid out in a conventional estate style layout with access to all proposed dwellings taken from one access. The housing mix proposed on the submitted drawings comprises 4 x 2 bed; 10 x 3 bed; 16 x 4 bed and 4 x 5 bed and are arranged as a mix of single storey and two storey properties with a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings shown. This results in a density per hectare of 17.

2.3. Off-street parking is offered within the development and complies with adopted parking standards, tandem parking is not shown within the submitted drawings. Pedestrian footpaths within the site offer connectivity from the A1120 to East End Road. It is proposed that the site would link into further footpath improvements along the A1120 to allow connectivity from Stonham Aspal to Stonham Barns, although this route is yet to be provided and is reliant on other developments within Stonham Aspal coming forward in a timely manner.

2.4. Private amenity space is offered for all proposed dwellings and an element of public open space is proposed along the boundary of the site with East End Road to incorporate a children’s play area.

2.5. Back to back distances within the site range between 20 metres and 30 metres and are considered to be adequate to prevent unacceptable levels of the overlooking between the proposed dwellings. Outside of the site, frontages are arranged to look out onto frontages. To the northern boundary of the site, the good set back of Aramoana and Longlards Hall, the proposed open space and East End Road provide some 60 to 70 metres of separation.
2.6 Construction materials for the proposed dwellings would be conditioned in the event of planning permission for the application being granted.

3. The Principle of Development

3.1 The starting point for any planning decision is the development plan, as identified in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Determination of any application must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A key material consideration regarding the principle of development is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019.

3.2 For the purposes of the application at hand, the following documents are considered to form the adopted Development Plan:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2018)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG, 2014)
- Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focussed Review (2012)
- Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008)
- Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998)

3.3 The NPPF requires the approval of proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay, or where there are no policies, or the policies which are most important are out of date, granting permission unless the NPPF policies provide a clear reason for refusal, or adverse impacts of doing so would demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The age of policies itself does not cause them to cease to be part of the development plan or become “out of date” as identified in paragraph 213 of the NPPF. Significant weight should be given to the general public interest in having plan-led decisions even if the particular policies in a development plan may be old, and weight can be attributed to policies based on their compliance with the requirements of the NPPF.

3.4 While the lack of a demonstrable five-year housing land supply was mentioned during pre-application discussions, the Council is now in a position such that it can demonstrate it possesses a five-year housing land supply. There is therefore no requirement for the Council to consider the relevant weight to apply to its planning policies on this basis.

3.5 Even if policies are considered to be out of date, that does not make them irrelevant; their weight is not fixed, and the weight to be attributed to them is within the remit of the decision taker. There will be many cases where restrictive policies are given sufficient weight to justify refusal.

3.6 Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy identifies a settlement hierarchy as to sequentially direct development, forming part of a strategy to provide for a sustainable level of growth. The Policy identifies categories of settlement within the district, with Towns representing the most preferable location for development, followed by the Key Service Centres, Primary then Secondary Villages. The countryside is identified as the areas outside of those categories of settlement referred to above.

3.7 Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy restricts development in the countryside to defined categories. The proposed development does not fall within any of the listed categories. Policy H7 of the Local Plan 1998 seeks to restrict housing development in the countryside in the interests of protecting its existing character and appearance.

3.8 The proposal site is located in the countryside and is therefore inconsistent with policies CS1, CS2 and H7.
3.9 However, Policy CS2 applies a blanket restriction on development to all land outside the settlement boundary, as does saved Policy H7. This approach is not consistent with the NPPF, which favours a more balanced approach to decision-making. The NPPF does contain a not dissimilar exceptional circumstances test, set out at paragraph 79, however it is only engaged where development is physically isolated. For the reasons set out in this report, the development is not physically isolated and paragraph 79 of the NPPF is not engaged.

3.10 Having regard to the advanced age of the Mid Suffolk settlement boundaries and the absence of a balanced approach as favoured by the NPPF the material weight attributed to those policies is limited and the identified conflict with these policies and fact the site lies outside of established settlement boundaries cannot be considered to be determinative factors on which this application turns.

3.11 The presumption in favour of sustainable development and the need for a balanced approach to decision making are key threads to Policy FC01 and FC01_1 of the Core Strategy and are also the most up-to-date elements of the Mid Suffolk development plan, adopted in 2012. These policies are generally consistent with the NPPF, carry greater statutory weight and provide the principal assessment framework for the assessment of this application.

3.12 Consequently, paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged. It requires that planning permission be granted unless:

i. “The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of 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.”

3.13 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF is applicable in this circumstance. It requires that the presumption of sustainable development is pursued within the decision-making process. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF defines the objectives of sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the economic, social and environmental benefits or harms of a given application. In saying this, paragraph 9 should also be noted as this notes that these considerations are “not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged”.

3.14 How the proposal performs against the three mutually dependent dimensions of sustainable development is assessed in detail below:

4. Economic Dimension

4.1 The NPPF advises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. The provision of 34 dwellings will give rise to employment during the construction phase of the development owing to the scale of the development. The New Anglia ‘Strategic Economic Plan’ (April 2014) acknowledges that house building is a powerful stimulus for growth and supports around 1.5 jobs directly and 2.4 additional jobs in the wider economy for every home built. Job creation, associated with a likely three year plus build out period, is a direct economic benefit. Future occupiers of the development will use local services and facilities in Stonham Aspal and at Stonham Barns, and therefore there will be longer term benefits to the community from local spending. The direct and longer-term benefits attract positive weight in favour of the scheme.
5. Social Dimension

5.1 The provision of 34 market dwellings even at a time when the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land constitutes a positive in social terms. However, this cannot and should not be viewed as creating a cap on housing development and the delivery of housing from this site would contribute positively towards the Council's housing delivery targets. The application proposes the delivery of 35% affordable dwellings, consistent with saved Policy H4. The provision of this quantum of affordable homes is a planning benefit.

5.2 The Parish Council is concerned with the strain that will be placed on local services, in particular schools and the medical system. It is well-established industry practice that CIL contributions are used to ensure existing infrastructure capacity is enhanced to accommodate additional demand. Additional infrastructure requirements is a consequence of the development, but it is not an adverse social impact. As per industry practice, CIL contributions are to be used to manage future infrastructure demand.

6. Environmental Dimension

Access to Services and Facilities

6.1 The site is located in the countryside in policy terms, however, there is a close physical relationship with neighbouring domestic development, including the Stonham Barns complex to the south. The site is not deemed to be isolated in a functional sense. Stonham Aspal is served by a range of local services and facilities including primary school, pre-school, village hall, church, tennis and basketball court, play and recreation ground, sports ground, village shop, farm shop and bus services.

6.2 The application is supported by a Highways Statement. The Statement sets out a convincing case that the site is a sustainable location for residential development. Noteworthy is the footpath connectivity that will be achieved between the site and the village.

6.3 At present no footpaths are provided within the village past the junction of the A1120 with Crowfield Road such that pedestrian movements to the services at Stonham Barn from Stonham Aspal are made on the public highway. This application would offer a public footpath along its frontage as well as within the site to connect from East End Road.

6.4 The delivery of a complete route to Stonham Aspal does rely on the construction of a footpath on the southern side of the A1120, associated with a Stonham Barns planning permission (3150/15), as well as the construction of a 10-dwelling development approved at the corner of the A120 and Crowfield Road (4847/16). There is no evidence to suggest that these developments will not be built out and deliver the required infrastructure.

6.5 Not only will this offer pedestrian connectivity to the village amenities, but also connectivity to bus stops that serve bus route 115 between Mendlesham and Ipswich offering alternative, more sustainable, means of travel.

Impact on the Landscape

6.6 Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy seeks to protect and conserve landscape qualities taking into account the natural environment and the historical dimension of the landscape as a whole rather than concentrating solely on selected areas, protecting the District's most important components and encouraging development that is consistent with conserving its overall character.
Paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils.

The site does not lie within, nor near any landscape designation. The site is open and currently contributes to the rural setting of the village. The heavily treed area west of the site, around Heatherleigh, does however provide a backdrop that frames the site visually when appreciated in views west toward the village. The rural character of the broader location is compromised by the Stonham Barns complex, comprising an adhoc collection of buildings and structures lacking any uniformity in appearance.

The development will result in an urbanising effect and loss of rural character owing to its scale, this is inevitable with an undeveloped site. However, the site is flanked on all sides, bar one, by development. The vegetated backdrop also softens the built form impact. The surrounding development is such that a housing proposal will not appear as visually intrusive as it might otherwise would if surrounded by open, undeveloped fields.

The proposed northern open space corridor, combined with retention of the East End Road frontage hedgerow, offers a soft edge outcome to the site’s northern elevation. This is a respectful landscape response. Extensive landscape planting features along the current eastern edge, an essential requirement needed to maintain a rural edge character. The site’s eastern boundary aligns with an existing set of power lines and a small amount of vegetation demarcates this existing boundary. In a sense, the eastern boundary is a relatively natural one, following an already defined landscape boundary. The soft landscaped edges are consistent with Policy CS05.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy HB1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the character and appearance of buildings of architectural or historic interest, particularly protecting the settings of Listed Buildings. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Listed Building or its setting.

The heritage harm is considered limited. The most affected heritage asset is Longlands Hall, a large house set back from East End Road in a large plot north of the site. The Heritage Team note however that the proposed northern open space corridor greatly reduces the impact on the heritage asset. Heritage Officers consider the heritage harm to be minor and conflict with Policy HB1 to be only slight.

Local Plan Policy HB14 seeks to protect archaeological sites. The policy contemplates a conditional approach where it provides for the excavation and recording of archaeological remains.

The County Archaeological Service (CAS) notes the site lies in an area of archaeological potential, on the edge of the original extent of the medieval Stonham Aspal Green. There is high potential for the discovery of below-ground heritage assets of archaeological importance.

The CAS notes there are no grounds to consider refusal of permission and it recommends standard planning conditions. Officers concur with the recommended approach and consider it consistent with Policy HB14.
7. Site Access, Parking and Highway Safety Considerations

7.1 Saved Policy T10 of the Local Plan requires the Local Planning Authority to consider a number of highway matters when determining planning applications, including; the provision of safe access, the safe and free flow of traffic and pedestrian safety, safe capacity of the road network and the provision of adequate parking and turning for vehicles. Policy T10 is a general transport policy which is generally consistent with Section 9 of the NPPF on promoting sustainable transport. Its safety focus is also consistent with paragraph 108 of the NPPF which requires development proposals, incorporate safe and suitable access that can be achieved for all users. Saved Policy T10 is therefore attached substantial weight.

7.2 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

7.3 Consultation with the Highway Authority has not raised an objection regarding the proposed principal vehicle access arrangement.

7.4 A number of residents raise concerns regarding the speed limit at this location and the highway safety issues that this presents. Noteworthy is the Stonham Barns planning permission (3150/15), which includes Traffic Regulation Order that will result in a change in location of the 30mph speed limit.

7.5 Additional comments from the Highways Authority have been received requiring additional details on the nature of the footpath link from the site to Stonham Barns and into Stonham Aspal, an alteration to the internal layout of the site in order to avoid light dazzle from the internal roads to public highway, and further extension of the 30mph speed limit already partially provided by planning permission (3150/15).

7.6 Given the need to agree a Section 106 Agreement prior to the issue of any planning permission, it is considered that these points can either be addressed through the submission of additional drawings or through the addition of obligations within the Section 106 Agreement itself.

8. Design and Layout

8.1 Layout is a matter being sought by the applicant for approval. As noted in the Suffolk Design Guide (2000), the starting point to assess such a design element is the character of the existing settlement. The applicant’s site context plan (drawing 6D) very helpfully provides a basis for this assessment. The plan illustrates that whilst the overall existing settlement pattern is linear, it contains a good number of informal and enclosed developments. The approved developments in the village, not yet constructed, are also consistent with an informal, enclosed settlement pattern.

8.2 The development is laid out in a manner that the dwellings at the northern and southern elevations orient externally, providing legibility at the road frontages. The layout provides the opportunity for a series of identifiable spaces as one moves through the development, as recommended by the Suffolk Design Guide. The layout incorporates the northern open space corridor which, as already discussed, offers a soft interface to East End Lane and mitigates adverse effects on the setting of Longlands Hall. The development features generous plot depths where they relate appropriately to Heatherleigh, respectful of this property. The road layout, siting of dwelling and garages, is undertaken in a way that vehicle parking does not dominate the development, a welcome design element. On the whole, the layout is enclosed and informal, without being insular. The right design balance is struck, one respectful of the village settlement pattern.
8.3 Although not a layout-related matter, it is important to offer comment in respect to proposed building scale. The 3D modelling supporting the application suggests double story dwellings almost entirely across the site. This would be most unacceptable. The Suffolk Design Guide states that large scale emphasises differences between the old and new. A uniform double storey scale across the site would not only relate poorly to its landscape setting, it would result in a new large estate-like appearance, one not appropriate for the setting of this rural village. Moreover, it would be at odds with the diversity in building heights evident in the village, which features bungalows intermixed with double storey dwellings. A real diversity in the range of building heights is required, a matter to be considered at a later approvals stage if the Committee is minded to grant outline permission.

9. Landscape Impact, Trees, Ecology, Biodiversity and Protected Species

9.1 As noted earlier within this report, the application site does not fall within any special landscape designation. It is also noted that the development of the site will have an appreciable effect on the rural character of this edge of settlement site. However, the development would not be considered to be visually intrusive given the surrounding residential development and the provision of additional planting and open space to soften the impact of the development.

9.2 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (ancient woodland or ancient veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy has been put forward.

9.3 No such trees or woodland is present on the application site, although the extensive tree cover to the adjacent site is noted, as is their contribution to the amenity of the local area and their important role in supporting the biodiversity of the area. Given their proximity to the edge of the development it is considered necessary to impose conditions to secure the protection of these trees throughout any development on site such that this contribution can be maintained.

9.4 Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 provides that all "competent authorities" (public bodies) to "have regard to the Habitats Directive in the exercise of its functions." Comments from the Council's Planning Policy Team regarding the proximity of the site to a Natura 2000 site are noted, however, no such designation is shown by the European Commission.

9.5 The Ecological Survey Report produced by MHE Consulting Ltd dated February 2019 and submitted in support of this application also does not note the presence of any Natura 2000 sites within close proximity of the site. It concludes that there is no identified need for additional survey works in relation to the proposed development from either the presence of protected species or their habitats and that the development is consistent with the relevant regulatory advice and wildlife laws.

9.6 The report does note a number of ecological enhancements that should be incorporated into the development set out within Section 5 of the report and also the need for a biodiversity method statement to ensure development is carried out in such a manner that it would seek to avoid unintended impacts on wildlife. Both of these requirements are secured by planning condition.

10. Land Contamination

10.1 The Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment prepared by Frith:Blake Consulting Ltd in support of the application and dated January 2019 concludes the overall risk rating of the site in terms of potential land contamination to be low. Contamination risk could therefore be managed
appropriately by means of conditions relating to the responsible disposal of any identified contamination discovered during development of the site.

10.2 Discussions with the Council’s Environmental Health Officers have not reached a conclusion that differs from the one offered above. They note the use of an informative highlighting the fact that the responsibility for dealing with unexpected contamination factors on a development resides with the developer and that they are encouraged to contact the Council’s Environmental Health Team in order to discuss the removal of contaminants from the site.

11. Heritage Issues

11.1 As set out within the report, the Council’s Heritage Team notes a low level of harm from the proposed development and that further, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme in accordance with the Council’s statutory duties and relevant policies.

11.2 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Listed Building or its setting. While paragraph 193 of the NPPF requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be applied to its conservation.

11.3 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF notes that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as applicable in this case, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) identifies public benefits could be anything which delivers the economic, social or environmental benefits outlined within the NPPF at paragraph 8.

11.4 As demonstrated within the body of this report, social, economic and environmental public benefits are considered to flow from the proposed development. In weighing this against the identified harm to the heritage assets, is considered that sufficient weight should be applied to these considerations such that the public benefits of the application outweigh the harm.

12. Impact on Residential Amenity

12.1 External amenity impacts can only be considered in the full knowledge of all detailed design elements, including siting and scale. These are only indicative at this outline stage and are subject to change. Officers note the concern of neighbouring residents regarding loss of privacy; however, this matter simply cannot be scrutinised in any detail in the absence of the required plans and elevations. Residential amenity is therefore most appropriately managed at the reserved matters stage of the development process. New dwellings are located either a good distance or at oblique angles to existing dwellings such that opportunities for overlooking or overbearing impacts are considered to be adverse such that the development should be refused on these grounds.

12.2 Some objectors are concerned with a loss of countryside outlook. There is no denying that the scale of development will mean a change in outlook for neighbouring residents, most notably Heatherleigh and Longlands Hall. However, both of these properties are heavily vegetated at the nearest interfaces to the subject land. This significantly mitigates the impact the development will have on their outlook. Moreover, dwellings are set some distance in from the perimeter boundaries. For these reasons the change in outlook is not deemed an unacceptable planning outcome. Amenity harm is deemed minor in this respect, with any conflict with Saved Policy H13 attached limited weight.
13. Planning Obligations

13.1 The application would be subject to CIL which would deliver the majority of infrastructure required to support the development.

13.2 The affordable housing offered on the site is required to be secured via a Section 106 Agreement, with the mix and tenancy of the dwellings to be agreed.

13.3 Comments from Suffolk County Council’s Infrastructure Team notes the need for a planning obligation in order to support the transport costs for secondary school pupils from the site to the nearest secondary school and would be secured within the same agreement.

13.4 The Council would not consider adopting the public open space area or the children’s play space and local management arrangements must therefore be considered. A planning obligation is recommended to secure the submission of an Open Space Scheme detailing the type of open space and details of the specifications for the play space. It must also secure a Management Plan for the future management and ongoing maintenance of the open space and play space, including arrangements for ongoing funding. The open space would be transferred to a Management Company which would be required to maintain, manage and renew the open space and play space in accordance with the Management Plan. The arrangements to be secured are necessary to ensure that the required open space and play space is provided and thereafter appropriately maintained.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

14. Planning Balance and Conclusion

14.1 The site is outside the settlement boundary however conflict with development plan policies that limit development in the countryside is attached very limited weight as these policies are not consistent with the NPPF and are out-of-date.

14.2 Principal social and economic benefits are offered in the form of a boost to local housing supply and affordable units, albeit acknowledging the district does have a five plus year housing supply. This said, the local housing benefit is consistent with paragraph 59 of the NPPF, which clearly supports significantly boosting the supply of homes across the country.

14.3 The site is a sustainable location for housing, noting pedestrian connectivity with the village and nearby bus stops will be good, once linking footpaths forming part of approved neighbouring development are constructed. Car dependency will be moderated, limiting environmental harm. Biodiversity and the natural environment will not be adversely impacted, consistent with paragraphs 170 and 174 of the NPPF.

14.4 Domestic development surrounds the site except to the east. The site benefits from an established vegetated backdrop to the west, and to lesser extent to the north, helping frame the site visually and offer visual containment. There will be landscape character harm resulting from the urbanising effect that comes with developing an open field, however the intrusive effect on the countryside is mitigated by the surrounding development and vegetation. Heritage character harm is minor, well below a level that would otherwise outweigh the planning benefits. The informal, relatively enclosed layout is consistent with the village settlement pattern. It provides identifiable spaces, is not vehicle dominated and has the potential to create good townscape. The layout is acceptable.
14.5 Residential amenity is not for consideration as this cannot be assessed in detail until all reserved matters are known. Landscaping is also not for assessment and therefore landscaping conditions are not recommended.

14.6 The Highways Authority does not object to the scheme. There is no evidence to suggest the proposed single access point to the A1120 will compromise highway safety. The vehicle access is acceptable.

14.7 CIL contributions will be used to ensure existing infrastructure capacity is enhanced to meet additional demand, a neutral outcome in the planning balance. Archaeology and drainage matters are adequately managed by planning conditions.

14.8 Policy conflicts are limited and where they do occur, largely relate to out-of-date policies. The proposal constitutes sustainable development for which the NPPF and local development plan policies carry a presumption in favour, and therefore the application is recommended for approval.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That authority be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer – Sustainable Communities to grant Planning Permission for the above development following successful amendments to the layout to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority:

(1) **Subject to the prior agreement of a Section 106 Planning Obligation on appropriate terms to the satisfaction of the Chief Planning Officer – Sustainable Communities to secure:**

- Affordable housing to be delivered on site in accordance with the Council’s adopted policies with mix and tenancy to be agreed with the Professional Lead – Strategic Housing;
- Contribution towards secondary school pupil travel costs as outlined within the response from Suffolk County Council’s Development Infrastructure Manager; and
- To secure onsite delivery of open space and to agree management details for said open space with the requirement for public access to the open space at all times.

(2) **That the Chief Planning Officer – Sustainable Communities be authorised to grant Planning Permission upon completion of the legal agreement subject to conditions as summarised below and those as may be deemed necessary by the Corporate Manager:**

- TIME LIMIT FOR RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION
- APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS
- APPROVAL OF PHASING OF DEVELOPMENT
- APPROVED PLANS & DOCUMENTS
- SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN SCHEME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
- COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF POST ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION ASSESSMENT REPORT
- AGREEMENT OF EXTERNAL FACING AND ROOFING MATERIALS
- TREE AND NATURAL FEATURE PROTECTION
- FIRE HYDRANTS
- SUBMISSION OF DETAIL OF ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS
- BIODIVERSITY CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT
- NO EXTERNAL LIGHT FIXTURES
- SCHEME OF ONSITE FOUL WATER DRAINAGE WORKS
- PROVISION OF VISIBILITY SPLAYS TO ACCESS
- DETAILS OF ACCESS TO SUBMITTED
- DETAILS OF ESTATE ROADS AND FOOTPATHS
- PROVISION OF CARRIAGeways AND FOOTPATHS TO DWELLINGS
- DETAILS OF PARKING, MANOEUVRING, ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING AND CYCLE STORAGE TO BE AGREED
- CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT
- SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE DETAILS
- DETAILS OF REFUSE AND RECYCLING BIN STORAGE AND PRESENTATION AREAS

(3) And the following informative notes as summarised and those as may be deemed necessary by the Chief Planning Officer:

1. Statement of positive and proactive working in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
2. Archaeology Brief from Suffolk County Council
3. Environmental Health – Unexpected discovery of land contamination

(4) That in the event of the Planning obligations referred to in Resolution (1) above not being secured to the Chief Planning Officers satisfaction and/or the highways amendments not being secured to the Highway Authority’s satisfaction that the Chief Planning Officer – Sustainable Communities be authorised to refuse the application on appropriate grounds.

(5) That in the event of the Planning obligations referred to in Resolution (1) above not being secured within 6 months that the Chief Planning Officer – Sustainable Communities be authorised to refuse the application on appropriate grounds.