

BJW/ESH/19/013
5th February 2020

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Babergh District Council
Planning Services
8 Endeavour House
Russell Road
IPSWICH IP1 2BX

FAO Samantha Summers

Dear Ms Summers,

Revised Planning Application for Detached Single Dwelling
Lavenham Priory, Water Street, Lavenham, CO10 9RW
Ref: DC/19/04445

Following the recent committee site inspection, the Applicant wishes to make some further comments by way of clarification.

It is confirmed in the officer committee report, para 4.1, that the application site is well related to the village and local services and is therefore deemed a sustainable location. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Further, the Council's own current adopted policy CS11- Strategy for development in Core and Hinterland Villages, in the preamble states that it intentionally provides flexibility for appropriate development beyond built up area boundaries in core villages.

Also, Policy H1 of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan allows for new development within or adjacent the built-up area boundary where it is well related, as confirmed in the planning officer's assessment.

Consequently, the proposed dwelling accords with both national and local plan policies as far as the principle of development is concerned.

Additionally, the boundary line to the rear of properties in water street is drawn arbitrarily straight, not following any feature on the ground. In fact, the real visible and distinct boundary between managed urban land of the village and open countryside is the footpath and hedge which form the southern boundary of the site.

The Inspector for the previous planning Appeal, for what was a larger more visible dwelling on a higher part of the site to the western end, determined

“ ..overall, the setting of listed buildings on water street would not be harmed”.

The current proposal is for a dwelling, much smaller with a lower, green roof and dug-in at the lower, eastern side of the land.

Therefore, impact on the nearby Listed Buildings is not a concern for this proposal.

During the site visit the Case Officer confirmed that the principle concern, and reason for the site visit was to assess the impact of the proposed dwelling to the character of the conservation area and important views in and out of the village.

On the southern boundary of the land is a mature hedge with fence behind. This also forms the boundary of the conservation area and is a natural distinction between village and countryside.

As was evident during the site meeting, even with the hedge devoid of foliage there are no views into or across the site towards the village.

Consequently, views into the village are unaffected by the proposal.

By virtue of the dense and mature hedge boundary, the land which includes the application site is not publicly visible as open land, just extended domestic garden.

The character of the Conservation area is comprised in the wider sense of its collective appreciative views from the public realm.

In Lavenham, this is the close nit arrangement of historic buildings at its core. The proposed dwelling and its location do not impact on this appreciation, so do not detract from the Character of the Area.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

Paragraph 11 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development. It has already been acknowledged by virtue of the location of the site being well related to the built-up area boundary and village centre, the site is sustainable. It will add to support of local services and brings a modest economic benefit by virtue of this and during the construction phase.

Paragraph 118 – requires decisions and local plan policies to encourage development of brownfield and underused land in urban and rural areas.

Paragraph 131 – advises that great weight should be given to innovative designs that promote high levels of sustainability, as proposed in this case.

Paragraphs 192-196 deals with considering the effects of the proposal on designated heritage assets. The applicant considers, by virtue of the design and location of the proposed dwelling the effect character of the conservation is neutral, and no harm will result.

Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan

Policy H1 allows for new development within or adjacent the built-up area boundary where it is well related, as confirmed in the planning officer’s assessment.

This site is less well related to the pattern of development as Water Street is all frontage, however the Quakers Yard houses which adjoin the application site, are set back behind frontage buildings, **therefore backland, and also outside the built-up area boundary.** Consequently, any potential conflict is not clear cut.

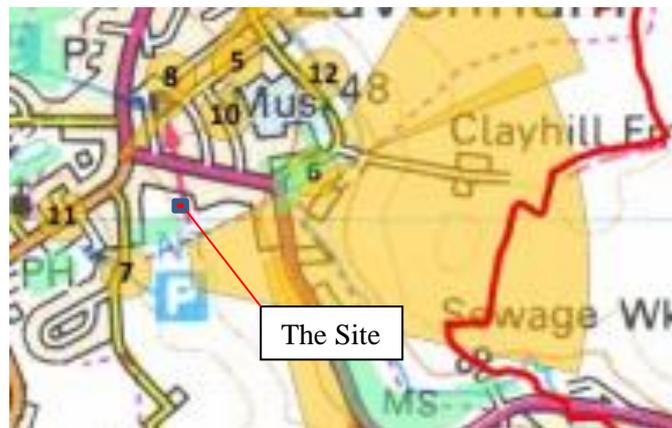
The primary consideration therefore remains one of effects on the Conservation Area.

The design of the property is intentionally contemporary, and being part buried ensures it does not dilute or compete with the existing historic buildings on water street and gives a smooth transition to countryside beyond the site boundary hedge - which itself is a strong physical and very well established boundary between open countryside and village land.

The plan identifies defined views in and out of the village. 2 and 4 into the village are defined as key views

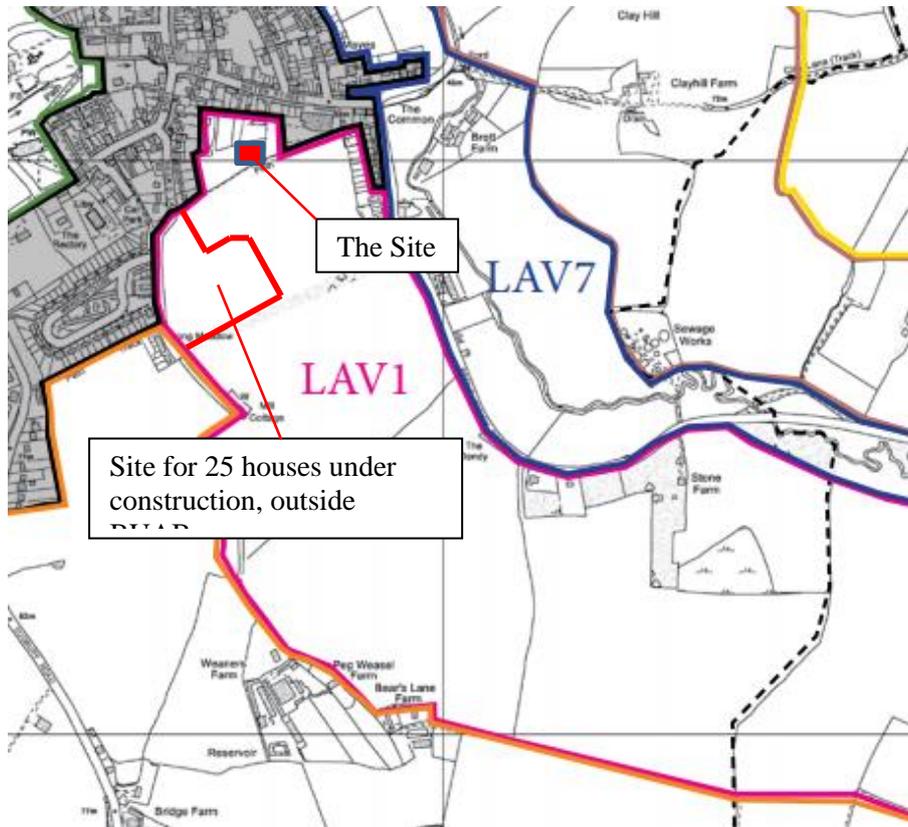


and 7, out of the village is defined as an additional valued view.



These are the only ones which look towards the site. However, these are distant views which will not be affected by the proposed development. The site is not within the scope of View 7.

This area of rear garden to the Priory, which includes the application site is Defined as LAV 1 – Pit Meadow.



The LAV 1 area is extensive, comprising large areas of cultivated agricultural land to the south of the village.

At its northern edge, it includes residential gardens to the properties along Water street, including Lavenham Priory.

As mentioned above, this area and the application site lie to the north of the existing footpath and hedge and as such are physically separated from the majority of the LAV 1 area.

The appearance of the area has been significantly affected by the recent development of 25 houses, currently under construction. These sit on high ground off Bears lane and are clearly visible and impact on the defined Views into and out of the village.

In Appendix 2 of assessment, LAV 1 is stated to have a medium to high landscape sensitivity but good ability to mitigate small scale development by virtue of this.

It also appraises new development size with the likely effects on plan objectives. It determines that it wishes to limit the number of dwellings delivered in this way - Lavenham has very few opportunities for infill development in the village core - individual/infill plots will have a neutral effect in all defined plan objectives for economic, social and environmental roles. Consequently, it concludes, development in this form is unlikely to impact adversely on the quality of the historic environment.

The proposal therefore accords with Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Effects on Conservation Area

By way of confirmation the application site and adjacent land to the west, also part of Lavenham Priory's extended garden, the land falls approximately 10m in height, west to east and is peppered with trees. This allows the house to be integrated into the landscape rather than sat on it. Using the land to mask the building.

The public footpath to the south of the site is generally around 1m below the corresponding site level with a small embankment surmounted by a mature hedge, over 2m high, interspersed with trees around 5-6m high. All presenting a dense boundary enclosure.

This and the significant tree plantations midway between the footpath and existing buildings on Water Street, 125m distant, have the combined effect of there being no views of those buildings from the footpath.

The building has been designed with great care to be a very green eco-home, cut into the ground to utilise the significant slope with a green roof to ensure it respects and harmonises with its landscape as the submitted CGI images show.

Being cut in and with the earth screening any domestic items, parked cars etc will be hidden from public and others view.

It is disappointing that Historic England made no real comments on the revised scheme and any improvement it may offer, simply repeating their earlier blanket general objection.

The recent development of 25 houses on the western part of Pit Meadow, adjoining bears lane, has an indisputable effect on the conservation area character.

By contrast the approval of a new single storey flat roofed dwelling recently built behind Little Hall in the centre of Lavenham, B/15/00860 is within the conservation area, at the historic core, immediately adjacent to two Grade II* listed Buildings and most certainly out of character with adjoining buildings, but received the following conclusion from Historic England, 5th August 2015, before consent was granted

“we have considered the current proposals in light of this governments policy and relevant English heritage Guidance and while the proposed building is not of a type normally appropriate for an historic settlement as significant and sensitive as Lavenham conservation area we would not wish to oppose the granting of consent in this instance because the visual impact is limited...”

It is submitted the proposed development at Lavenham Priory will have similarly limited visual impact.

Recent other Approved dwellings outside BUAB's

Several rural and eco-homes have been approved in recent years in far more isolated locations than this site, using Paras 55 & 79 of the NPPF. The applicant is confident these decisions were made with the foresight to appreciate the contribution they make overall not only to their environment but as innovative and aspirational examples for the future.

- B/16/00955/FUL – Lodge Farm, Lindsey – 1 dwelling (2016), adjacent 2 Grade 1 Listed Buildings
- B/16/00542/FUL – Birdsfield, Lindsey – 2 dwellings (2016)

- B/16/00084/FUL – Rose Cottage, Daisy Green, Groton – 1 dwelling (2016), also adjacent a Listed Building
- B/15/00813/FUL – The Bungalow, Bures Road, Little Cornard – 3 dwellings (2015)
- B/15/00052/FUL – Old Rectory, The Tye, Lindsey – 1 dwelling (2015)
- B/13/01448/FUL – The Wrens, The Tye, Lindsey – 1 dwelling (2014)
- B/11/00604/FUL – New dwelling at Clay Hill Farm Lavenham

Other Matters

During the site visit comment was made concerning the actual construction of the dwelling and condition of the access driveway from Water Street.

This access is owned by the applicant but used by adjacent properties. The surface of the immediate area of the access is in poor current condition, and the Applicant would intend improving this as part of the development process. To this end the applicant would accept conditions requiring making good of the access surfacing together with production of a Construction management and site deliveries Plan.

This site and remaining Priory garden are not visible from the footpath or public view, the design is contemporary respecting the site topography and surroundings to achieve a building of quiet presence integrated in its landscape and ensuring there is no harm to the Conservation Area.

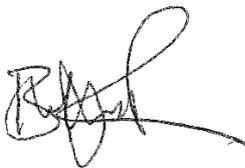
As previously mentioned, the proposed dwelling is an Eco home, and will incorporate many cutting edge and energy efficient technologies. But equally important to minimise its environmental impact is the nature and method of construction.

It is predominately a rendered hempcrete block structure with intensive green roof built in a cut and fill process.

The aim being that excavated material from the cut will be used to adjust levels and form earth screening to hide the building. Thus, ensuring minimal, if any, requirement to take material from the site. Equally the hemp blocks are constructed on site from base materials and other construction elements designed in manageable sizes to ensure smaller delivery vehicles and mechanical plant requirements.

In Conclusion, this proposal, is designed to sit within the landscape working with the topography of the site, screened to not be visible or disrupt any perceived public or important views of Lavenham ensuring there is no harm caused to heritage assets or the character of the conservation area. It is well related and close to the village and local services which includes a good bus service to surrounding towns and further afield, thus accords with the intentions of both National and Local planning Policy.

Yours faithfully,



B. J. Whymark, MSc, FRICS, C.BuildE, FCABE